

Nature is in crisis: Here are ten easy ways you can make a difference

April 11 2023, by Matthew Selinske, Georgia Garrard, Jaana Dielenberg and Sarah Bekessy



Walk your dog on a leash in natural areas so it can't chase and scare native wildlife. Credit: Jaana Dielenberg

Last month, Sir David Attenborough called on United Kingdom residents to "[go wild once per week.](#)" By this, he meant taking actions which help rather than harm the natural world, such as planting wildflowers for bees and eating more plant-based foods.

Australia should follow suit. We love our natural environment. But we have almost 10 times more species threatened with extinction [than the UK](#). How we act can accelerate these declines—or help stop them.

We worked with 22 [conservation experts](#) to identify [10 actions](#) which actually do help nature.

Why do we need to act for nature?

If you go for a bushwalk, you might wonder what the problem is. Gums, wattles, cockatoos, honeyeaters, possums—everything is normal, right? Alas, we don't notice what's no longer there. Many areas have only a few of the native species once present in large numbers.

We are losing nature, nation-wide. Our threatened birds are [declining](#) very rapidly. On average, there are now [less than half](#) (48%) as many of each threatened bird species than in 1985. Threatened plants have fared even worse, with average declines of over [three quarters \(77%\)](#).

Biodiversity loss will have far-reaching consequences and is one of the [greatest risks](#) to human societies, according to the [OECD](#).

The small choices we all make accumulate to either help or harm nature.

Our top 10 actions to help biodiversity

1. Choose marine stewardship council certified

seafood products

Why? Overfishing is devastating for fish species. By-catch means even non-food species can die in the process.

Where to start: Look for the blue tick of the [Marine Stewardship Council \(MSC\)](#) or the green tick of the [Aquaculture Stewardship Council \(ASC\)](#) approval on [seafood products where you shop](#), or use the [Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide](#). Certified products are caught or farmed sustainably.

2. Keep your dog on a leash in natural areas—including beaches

Why? Off-leash dogs scare and can attack [native wildlife](#). When animals and birds have to spend time and energy fleeing, they miss out on time to eat, rest and feed their young.

Where to start: Look for local off-leash areas and keep your dog leashed [everywhere else](#).

3. Cut back on beef and lamb

Why? Producing beef and lamb [often involves](#) destroying or overgrazing [natural habitat](#), as well as culling native predators like dingoes.

Where to start: Eat red meat [less often](#) and eat smaller portions when you do. Switch to poultry, sustainable seafood and more plant-based foods like beans and nuts. Suggest a [meatless Monday](#) campaign in your friend and family group chat to help wildlife—and your own health.

4. Donate to land protection organizations

Why? These organizations protect land in perpetuity. Donations help them expand and do important on-ground biodiversity management.

Where to start: Check out organizations such as the [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#), [Bush Heritage Australia](#), [Trust for Nature](#), and [Tasmanian Land Conservancy](#).

5. Make your investments biodiversity-friendly

Why? Many funds include companies whose business model relies on exploiting the natural environment. Your money could be contributing. Looking for biodiversity-positive investments can nudge funds and companies to [do better](#).

Where to start: Look at the approach your superannuation fund takes to sustainability and consider switching if you aren't impressed. You could also explore the growing range of biodiversity-friendly investment funds.

6. Donate to threatened species and ecosystem advocacy organizations

Why? These groups rely on donations to fund biodiversity advocacy, helping to create better planning and policy outcomes for our species.

Where to start: Look into advocacy groups like [WWF Australia](#), [Birdlife Australia](#), [Biodiversity Council](#), [Environment Center NT](#), and the [Environmental Defenders Office](#).

7. Plant and maintain a wildlife garden wherever you have space

Why? Our cities aren't just concrete jungles—they're important habitat for many threatened species. Gardening with wildlife in mind increases habitat and connections between green space in suburbs.

Where to start: Your council or native nursery is often a great source of resources and [advice](#). Find out if you have a threatened local species such as a [butterfly](#) or [possum](#) you could help by growing plants, but remember that non-[threatened species](#) also need help.

8. Vote for political candidates with strong environmental policies

Why? Electing pro-environment candidates changes the game. Once inside the tent, environmental candidates can shape public investment, planning, policy and programs.

Where to start: Look into local candidate and party policies at every election. Consider talking to your current MP about environmental issues.

9. Desex your cat and keep it inside or in a cat run

Why? Research shows every pet cat kept inside saves the lives of 110 native animals every year, on average. Desexing cats avoids unexpected litters and helps to keep the feral cat population down.

Where to start: Keep your cat inside, or set up a secure cat run to protect wildlife from your cute but lethal pet. It's entirely possible to have happy and healthy [indoor cats](#). Indoor cats also live longer and healthier lives.

10. Push for better control of pest animals

Why? Pest species like feral horses, pigs, cats, foxes and rabbits are hugely destructive. Even [native species](#) can become destructive, such as when wallaby populations balloon when dingoes are killed off.

Where to start: Look into the damage [these species](#) do and tell your friends. Public support for better control is essential, as these issues often fly under the radar.

Making a difference

Conservation efforts may seem far away. In fact, our daily choices and actions have a considerable effect.

Talking openly about issues and actions can help these behaviors and habits spread. If we all do a small part of the work and support others to do the same, we will see an enormous effect.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Nature is in crisis: Here are ten easy ways you can make a difference (2023, April 11) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-04-nature-crisis-ten-easy-ways.html>

| |
|--|
| <p>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.</p> |
|--|