



THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

What next?

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“The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” *LP Hartley*



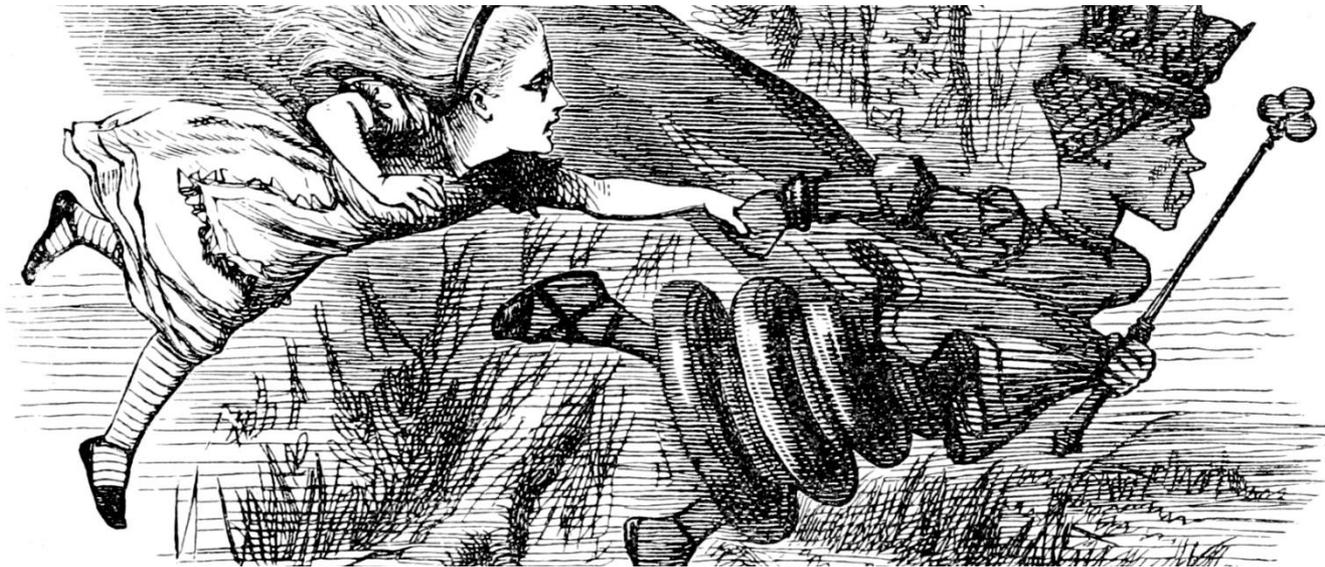
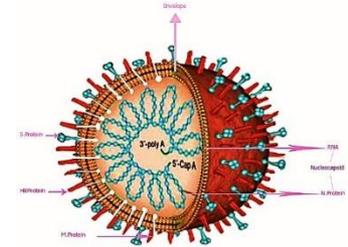
2020: Biodiversity was having a ‘Moment’

The vision of the Post-2020 Framework is a world of living in harmony with nature where:

“By 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people.”



But our planet has a shifting baseline.....



“Here you need to run as fast as you can, just to stay in the same place”. As depicted by John Tenniel

The beneficial effects of coronavirus on biodiversity?

Florida: endangered sea turtles thriving thanks to Covid-19 restrictions

Researchers are seeing an increase in nests as restrictions keep humans and harmful waste off beaches



▲ A leatherback turtle in Florida. Photograph: Mark Conlin/Getty Images

Marine life researchers in Florida say that coronavirus restrictions keeping humans and harmful waste off beaches are having a beneficial effect on the numbers of endangered leatherback sea turtles in the state.

- Marine, freshwater and terrestrial species evidently thriving in some locations due to reduced direct / noise / light disturbance (UNEP)
- Wild flowers thriving due to reduced intervention / road maintenance (Plantlife)
- Sensitive habitats and species will benefit (as will humans) from improved local air quality
- Biggest ever annual fall in carbon emissions
- People interacting with and appreciating nature

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And the potential negative effects on biodiversity

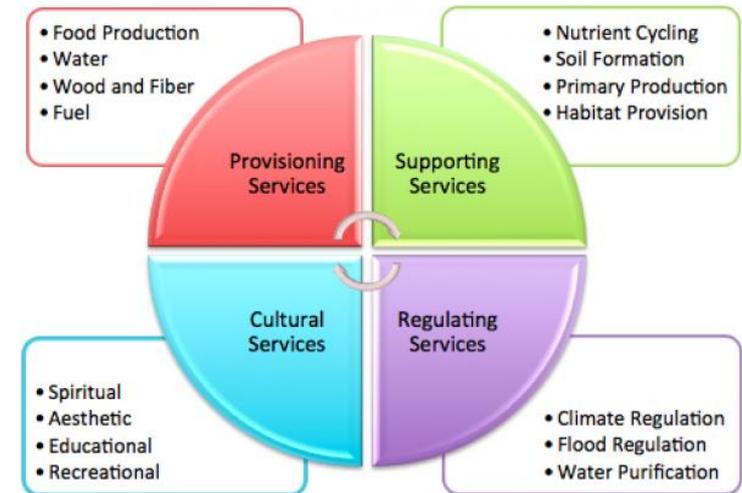
- Lockdown restrictions resulting in lack of essential management
- Illegal logging / poaching / hunting / over-fishing / exploitation of wildlife
- Increased waste / fly-tipping
- Food waste due to changes in supply chains
- Lack of access to land for ecological survey and monitoring
- Important global agreements on biodiversity and climate change postponed until next year



As a consequence of the unprecedented use of disposable face masks, a significant number of masks were discarded in the natural environment, adding to the worldwide burden of plastic waste

The future...

How can we use what we have learned about the environmental benefits and risks of sharp drops in global economic activity to better understand the mechanics of environmental sustainability, societal consumption patterns, and how we can reduce environmental degradation in future?



Source: Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005.

The Big Ideas for Big Challenges

- Make reporting on biodiversity and ESS impacts mandatory
- Combine policy on climate change and biodiversity through the CoPs
- Governments to appoint Chief Ecologists and to test all policies for their effects on nature
- Mainstream biodiversity assessment across all land use decisions (a natural infrastructure plan)
- 30% of land and sea area under conservation measures; 10% strictly protected
- Rethink the economic system as though the environment mattered



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