

**‘Biodiversity, eco-system services and tourism – conflict or symbiosis?’
World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL) & WTM Responsible Tourism**

Responsible recovery of the travel and tourism sector after the Covid-19 crisis should be seen in the context of three overriding challenges facing humanity: Achieving net zero emissions / carbon neutrality by 2050; ensuring no more species loss after 2030, and decisively addressing growing inequality / inequity in society.

As we reset and rebuild in a more equitable way in a post-Covid world, the travel and tourism sector - which represented 10.3% of global GDP and one in every 10 jobs on the planet before the pandemic hit - should be at the forefront of building a new world order.

Biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. Around one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction. The accelerating rate of species loss, combined with the rapid loss of nature's material and non-material contributions to people's livelihoods, render this crisis at least as pressing a global priority as climate change and health pandemics.

The relationship between nature and societies finds expression in different ways. One way is through tourism. At the nexus between biodiversity and tourism we find local communities, who simultaneously benefit from nature-based tourism and are at the forefront of conservation and protection. We need to find integrated solutions at a global level (a key lesson from Covid-19 crisis!) and cannot afford to address climate change, biodiversity and poverty in silos.

Tourism is heavily dependent on eco-system services such as food, water and energy; while also acting as an effective eco-system service in itself. Nature-based destinations accounted for 50% of all touristic trips in 2018. Tourism is an important source of service exports, disproportionately so for developing countries. Properly managed tourism benefits local communities, supports employment and boosts economic development in a way that disincentives unsustainable alternatives. Tourism revenues encourage communities to protect key wildlife populations and habitats. Its growth should / can enhance rather than degrade biodiversity. And it should / can educate visitors about biodiversity values and habitats. Responsible tourism is also an important source of revenue for the conservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, species and protected areas. Biodiversity furthermore has a critical role in achieving a carbon neutral world.

At the same time, tourism economies will be disrupted due to accelerating biodiversity loss. Some negatives on tourism's 'biodiversity balance sheet' include the illegal trade in wildlife products (noting that tourism also provides a bulwark against poaching in conservation areas), the spread of alien and invasive species, pressure on habitats due to poorly planned developments and land use, over-exploitation, waste disposal and pollution.

WTFL and WTM Responsible Tourism believe that true stewardship is not only be about zero impact or mitigating impact, but rather about having a positive impact – economic, social and ecological.

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