



An Advocacy Toolkit for Nature

Biodiversity loss, nature protection, and the EU
strategy for nature

Contents

Nature matters, because...	3
We are losing nature like never before...	4
The effects of biodiversity loss are already here	5
These effects will get worse if the trend continues	6
But does it really matter?	7
So why are we losing biodiversity?	8
Tell me more about the link to climate change	9
Do people know about this?	10
How can we stop this loss?	11
Are there good examples we can follow?	12
What is Europe doing to solve the problem?	13
What can I do personally?	14

Nature matters, because...

- ✘ Biodiversity underpins all life on Earth
- ✘ Losing biodiversity means losing the vital services that societies depend on
- ✘ Ecosystems and soils absorb carbon and help us limit the effects of climate change

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. This web of living things is the fabric of life, cleaning the water we drink, pollinating our crops, purifying the air we breathe, regulating the climate, keeping our soils fertile, providing us with medicine, and providing many of the basic building blocks for industry.

Ecosystems provide crucial services that maintain our life support system. When we destroy biodiversity, we destroy this system, sawing off the branch that we are sitting on. Damaged ecosystems are more fragile, and have a limited capacity to deal with extreme events and new diseases. Well-balanced ecosystems, by contrast, protect us against unforeseen disasters, and when we use them in a sustainable manner they offer many of the best solutions to urgent challenges.

We need ecosystems and biodiversity for many reasons. In addition to their intrinsic value, and the non-material things they bring like spiritual enrichment and aesthetic value, ecosystems are the foundation of all economies and societies. They form the critical infrastructure that underpins our prosperity and existence.

Losing biodiversity is dangerous. This loss is...

- ✘ a **climate** issue, because destroying and damaging ecosystems and soils speeds up global warming
- ✘ a **business issue**, because natural capital provides essential resources for industry
- ✘ a **security** issue, because loss of natural resources, especially in developing countries, can lead to conflict
- ✘ a **food security** issue, because pollinators and soil organisms play a vital role in our food system
- ✘ a **health** issue because nature improves air, water and soil quality, reduces exposure to pollutants, and cools our cities.
- ✘ an **ethical** issue, because loss of biodiversity hurts the poorest most of all, making inequalities worse, and
- ✘ an **intergenerational** issue, because we are robbing our descendants of the basis for a fulfilled life
- ✘ a **moral** issue, because we should not destroy the living planet, and

Nature underpins all of the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Put Graph here

... it underpins society, and it's the basis of our economy.



Image from <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/images/18.36c25848153d54bdba33ec9b/1465905797608/sdgs-food-azote.jpg>

We are losing nature like never before...

- ✘ Human activities have pushed the planet into a sixth mass extinction, with 1 million species at risk of extinction
- ✘ Between 1970 and 2014, the global wildlife population fell by 60%
- ✘ Biodiversity above and below ground is declining in every region of the world at unprecedented speed
- ✘ This loss is closely linked to climate change, and part of a general ecological crisis.

Extinction rates are now around 100-1000 times higher than in pre-human times all around the world. This is the largest extinction event since the dinosaurs disappeared. Some 42% of terrestrial animal and plant species with known trends have declined in population size the last decade.

Tropical forests are being destroyed at fast rates, with an area the size of Greece lost every year. These forests are home to the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet. Global forested areas now cover only 68% of the area covered in the pre-industrial era.

If the global temperature rises by 2°C, **tropical coral reefs will disappear**, destroying the livelihoods of half a billion people.

Soils host an astounding diversity of life: 25%–30% of all species on Earth live in soils for all or part of their lives. **Soil biodiversity** is strongly impacted by human activities. Land and soil degradation in and outside the EU is increasingly reducing biodiversity and ecosystem services such as the provision of clean water and nutritious food, carbon capturing or protection against erosion.

The decline in insects is particularly dramatic. Insects matter because they are food for larger animals like birds, bats, reptiles, amphibians and fish. If this food source is taken away, all these animals will starve to death. Insects also perform services like pollination, pest control and nutrient recycling.

In 2018, a study of rainforests in Puerto Rico reported biomass losses between 98% and 78% for ground-foraging and canopy-dwelling [arthropods](#) since the 1980s, with annual losses of around 2.5%. Similar declines are seen with birds, frogs and lizards in the same areas as a direct result.

In 2019, a review of 73 historical reports on insect declines concluded that the current rates of decline could lead to 40% of world insect species going extinct in the next few decades.

The seas are suffering too, and there are now more than 400 dead zones in oceans around the world, mainly as a result of fertilizer run-off entering the oceans.

Wetlands in Western, Central and Eastern Europe have shrunk by 50% from 1970, while 71% fish and 60% of amphibians have been declining over the last decade. In Western and Central Europe and the western parts of Eastern Europe at least 37% of freshwater fish and about 23% of amphibians are currently threatened with extinction.

Links:

<https://ipbes.net/news/ipbes-global-assessment-preview>

European Red list of trees

<https://www.iucn.org/news/species/201909/over-half-europes-endemic-trees-face-extinction>

German insect study ([Hallmann et al., 2017](#)).

Porto Rico study ([Lister and Garcia, 2018](#))

UK study

https://www.somersetwildlife.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/FULL%20AFI%20REPORT%20WEB1_1.pdf

2019 study https://www.insect-respect.org/fileadmin/images/insect-respect.org/Rueckgang_der_Insekten/2019_Sanchez-Bayo_Wyckhuys_Worldwide_decline_of_the_entomofauna_A_review_of_its_drivers.pdf

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320718313636>

The effects of biodiversity loss are already here

- ✘ Many services we get from nature are declining because of biodiversity loss
- ✘ These include habitat maintenance, pollination, regulation of freshwater quantity and quality, soil formation, regulation of floods, and carbon sequestration

The world has lost 60% of all vertebrate wildlife populations since 1970, according to the WWF. That's more than half of all birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish gone in just 50 years.

Much of this loss happens outside Europe, so it often fails to register. Between 30-50% of mangroves have died or been removed in the past 50 years, and nearly 50% of coral reefs have been destroyed. But there have been major losses in Europe as well. In Germany in 2017, a study revealed a 76% decline in flying insect [biomass](#) in protected areas since 1990, a loss of nearly 3% per year.

If we don't change track, all of humanity will be affected. We need deep and transformative change to halt the loss of biodiversity above and below ground and stop damaging nature. At present, the people most affected are rural communities in developing countries who depend directly on nature to meet their day-to-day needs, but the eventual effects will be far more widespread.

It's not just about losing wildlife. When we lose biodiversity, we lose ecosystem services – the things that nature does for free. One quarter of the world's poor and over 90% of people living in extreme poverty depend on forests for some part of their livelihoods – and yet tropical forests are one of the major hotspots for biodiversity loss.

In the developed world, while the overall value of agricultural crop production has trebled since 1970, nature's other contributions, like soil organic carbon and pollinator diversity, have fallen, showing that these short-term gains in productivity are not sustainable.

Land degradation has already reduced the productivity of nearly one quarter of the global land surface. European wild pollinators are dramatically declining in diversity and abundance, and many are now approaching extinction. According to the European Red List of Trees, over half of Europe's endemic trees face extinction.

See <https://www.iucn.org/tags/work-area/red-list>

https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/all_publications/living_planet_report_2018/

These effects will get worse if the trend continues

- ✘ Biodiversity loss brings ‘extinction cascades’, where one species loss leads to another, which leads to another...
- ✘ Up to 5 billion people face higher water pollution and insufficient pollination for nutrition under future scenarios of land use and climate change
- ✘ When we damage ecosystems, they pump out carbon instead of storing it. These “feedback loops” accelerate the process of climate change

Losing biodiversity makes it impossible to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Already half of the 44 targets related to poverty, hunger, health, water, cities, climate, ocean and land degradation are being undermined by substantial negative trends in nature and its contributions to people.

One of the biggest concerns about both climate change and biodiversity loss is the existence of tipping points. These are the critical thresholds that should never be reached, because passing a tipping point can lead to large, abrupt changes, shifting a system into a different state. These shifts are difficult or impossible to reverse and can have drastic negative impacts. One past example was the collapse of the Newfoundland cod fishery in the 1990s, when cod biomass abruptly dropped to 1 percent of its previous figure because of sustained overfishing. Stocks are not expected to recover until 2030 at the earliest.

Several major tipping points have been identified for the world’s environment, including the Greenland ice sheet, Alpine glaciers, desertified soils and coral reefs. These tipping points could constitute points of no return – the point at which self-reinforcing feedback loops begin, with a risk of environmental collapse.

Almost one third of reef forming corals, sharks and shark relatives, and more than a third of marine mammals are now threatened with extinction.

Biodiversity loss is a root cause for conflict and migration, affecting vital interests of all societies. And it is very bad news for businesses. According to the World Economic Forum’s annual global risk reports, natural capital components such as air, water, soil, and biodiversity are among the most likely and impactful risks jeopardizing our economy and society.

American biologist Paul Ehrlich once compared the loss of species to randomly removing rivets from the wing of an aeroplane. The plane might continue to fly for a while, but at some point there will be a catastrophic failure.

BUT – there is still hope! We still have time to turn the tide on biodiversity loss and keep climate change to manageable levels – providing we act fast and at massive scale! Time is our biggest challenge. According to latest IPCC Special Reports the next 10 years will be decisive.

Links

World Economic Forum Global Risk Report 2020

<https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2020>

The European environment — state and outlook 2020 (SOER), European Environment Agency:

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/soer-2020>

But does it really matter?

- ✘ Humanity has been using more resources than the Earth can produce in a year since the 1970s
- ✘ It would now take 1.6 Earths to meet the demands we make on nature each year
- ✘ Up to 300 million people already face a higher risk of floods and hurricanes because of loss of coastal habitats and protection

Our collective impact on nature is unprecedented in the history of the planet. Human action has now significantly altered three quarters of the land-based environment and two thirds of the marine environment. In 2019, Earth Overshoot day – the day on which we used more resources than the Earth can replenish in a year – was 29 July.

More than one third of the world's land surface and nearly three quarters of freshwater resources are now devoted to crop or livestock production.

Losing biodiversity means losing options for the future, like the possibility of developing new drugs. Some 70% of cancer drugs are either natural products or synthetic ones inspired by nature, and 4 billion people rely primarily on natural medicines. Biodiversity loss means the loss of countless medicines before they are ever discovered – an irretrievable loss to humanity.

It matters on a personal level as well. Nature has many preventive and restorative effects on health. Regular contact with nature can reduce stress and promote physical activity, with a positive effect on mood, concentration and health, and lowering the risks linked to inactive lifestyles. Recent reports from the CBD and WHO confirm that healthy ecosystems are key to disease prevention and should be viewed as a fundamental pillar of cost-effective healthcare.

Even Europe's agriculture system has become a major driver of biodiversity loss. The widespread use of pesticides and fertilizers, soil erosion and the replacement of mixed growth forests with monoculture plantations are all having a negative effect on Europe's ecosystems. When soils degrade, they become less fertile, require more chemical inputs, and lose their capacity to retain water and carbon. This in turn makes floods more frequent and more intense, and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition to the pressures our food system now places on water, ecosystems and biodiversity, roughly one third of all the food produced in the world is wasted. This amounts to some 1.3 billion tonnes every year. In the EU, approximately one fifth of our food production is lost or wasted. This is the equivalent of 88 million tonnes of food, at a cost of EUR 143 billion.

Links

Biodiversity and health <https://www.cbd.int/health/stateofknowledge/>

Overshoot Day <https://www.overshootday.org/>

So why are we losing biodiversity?

- ✘ Habitat loss, over-exploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species all contribute to biodiversity loss
- ✘ But the underlying cause is unsustainable human activities
- ✘ Our demand for new resources is driving deforestation, changing patterns of land use, and destroying natural habitats all around the globe

The main reason behind the climate and ecological crisis is unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. The cumulative effect of an economic model where we design, manufacture, use, and then throw away rather than reusing or recycling has had unintended side-effects.

Extracting and processing materials, fuels and food is the reason behind 90% of biodiversity loss and half of all greenhouse gas emissions, according to the International Resource Panel.

Our consumerist economic model often means that political cycles and public and financial institutions are focused on short-term concerns, ignoring the wider implications for the longer term.

Climate change is already having an impact on biodiversity loss, interacting with other drivers and making them worse. It is also likely to increase the effects of the other causes of biodiversity loss in the future. These effects will be even more marked as the temperature continues to rise.

In Europe, the main cause of biodiversity loss is land-use change. Farming and forestry practices have become more intensive, with more chemical additives, fewer spaces between fields, and fewer varieties of crops. This lack of variety means far fewer insects, for example, and consequently fewer birds. Subsidies linked to production, encouraging quantity over quality and variety, are also a factor.

Cities and urban areas have also expanded enormously, sealing soils and leaving less room for nature. And when farmland and urban developments leave no room for nature, the result is a loss of biodiversity. Many citizens and businesses are unaware of the extent to which our society depends on biodiversity. The use of GDP as the main measurement of economic development can also obscure the full extent of our impact on the environment.

Links

<https://sdg.iisd.org/news/global-outlook-highlights-resource-extraction-as-main-cause-of-climate-change-biodiversity-loss/>

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27518/GRO_2019_SPM_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed

Tell me more about the link to climate change

- ✘ In terms of impacts, the global biodiversity crisis is just as bad as climate change
- ✘ Biodiversity loss and the climate crisis aren't just interconnected – they make each other worse
- ✘ But protecting biodiversity and restoring ecosystems is an excellent means of countering the effects of climate change

Climate change is catastrophically bad. In the words of an inter-institutional foresight study prepared by ESPAS for the European institutions, climate-related decisions will determine not only the future of our economies and societies, but indeed of humankind as a species.

But to make matters worse, biodiversity is strongly affected by the climate crisis. In addition to its impact on human well-being, **climate change is making ecosystems more fragile**, and intensifying the effects of other drivers of biodiversity loss, including habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, over-exploitation and invasive alien species.

Climate change is already causing dramatic changes to polar landscapes and seascapes and increasing wildfires, with rising temperatures causing wildlife to suffer as polar habitats change and continents burn. Our seas absorb more than 90% of the earth's excess heat, and as they warm they become less hospitable to marine life, and release more carbon into the atmosphere. Grasslands and savannahs are being lost, desertified and degraded faster than any other habitat type on the planet, as a result of rising temperatures.

At the same time, this loss of biodiversity is having a negative effect on the climate. Instead of storing carbon in soils and biomass, ecosystems release it back into the atmosphere. Deforestation increases the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which in turn causes further biodiversity loss.

So biodiversity loss and climate change are linked and interdependent. We can't address biodiversity loss without addressing climate change, and we can't address climate change unless we tackle biodiversity loss at the same time.

But on the upside, conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems can make a vital contribution to addressing climate change – so much so that 30 percent of our climate mitigation targets could be met by nature-based solutions, such as restoring forests, soils and wetlands. Addressing behavioural change and consumption patterns, such as excessive consumption of meat, would further reduce pressures on both biodiversity and climate change.

“Global trends to 2030” (ESPAS 2019)

https://espas.secure.europarl.europa.eu/orbis/sites/default/files/generated/document/en/ESPAS_Report2019.pdf

Climate change and biodiversity loss as two sides of the same coin:

https://wwf.panda.org/our_work/climate_and_energy/climate_nature_future_report/

Do people know about this?

Awareness of the importance of biodiversity is still low, but rising

Studies like the IPBES Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services adopted in May 2019, and television programmes like the Blue Planet series are helping redress the balance.

In a Eurobarometer survey of over 27 000 people in all Member States published in May 2019, 95% of respondents agreed that we have a responsibility to look after nature and that looking after nature is essential for tackling climate change. Some 93% also agreed that our health and well-being are based upon nature and biodiversity. A growing number of citizens are becoming aware of the positive role played by nature and ecosystems when it comes health and for food security, and to mitigate and adapt to climate change and other benefits.

While the momentum on biodiversity is building among different actors, including businesses, different levels of government or citizens, not everybody is yet on the same page when it comes to agreeing that there is an urgent need to address direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

Link to Eurobarometer

<https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2194>

IPBES report <https://ipbes.net/news/ipbes-global-assessment-preview>

How can we stop this loss?

- ✘ We need steep cuts in carbon emissions, and we need to scale up available solutions
- ✘ We need an ambitious global agreement to halt biodiversity loss at CBD COP 15 in China next year, as set out in the European Green Deal
- ✘ The coming global biodiversity framework for post 2020 needs to put nature on a path to recovery, with fast and deep transformative change

Scientists say that the next 10 years are critical. We need deep changes in the way we live and do business, from our energy system and the way we use land to buildings, cities, transport and food, and we need to approach land degradation neutrality by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050 or earlier. The European Green Deal is the EU response to this crisis.

Many solutions already exist, but we need to use them more widely and on a far greater scale. We need to implement them quickly, use cleaner energy sources, cut deforestation, manage land better and switch to sustainable agriculture.

We need to slash new CO₂ emissions and start removing CO₂ from the atmosphere. Photosynthesis by plants and plankton is the best carbon dioxide removal technology we have, so we should be protecting and restoring ecosystems and stopping their decline. And we need a transition that leaves nobody behind, to avoid a situation where people are more afraid of proposed measures than they are of the effects of climate change.

To lead the world in China, Europe needs to convince its partners that it is already acting on biodiversity at home and abroad.

We need a concern for biodiversity factored into policy decisions at all levels, from farming and agriculture to national plans for energy and transport. Transforming our civilisation and our economy to make it more sustainable will require more connected thinking, and a more holistic approach to social policy.

Businesses are beginning to realise that they depend on natural resources for food, fibres, and building material. Ecosystems pollinate crops, filter water, help waste to decompose, and regulate the climate. Losing nature has immediate costs for businesses in terms of operational risks, continuity of supply chains, liability risks and risks to reputation, market share and finance.

Front-running businesses recognise these risks, but their understanding has not yet reached mainstream, where there is often little knowledge about how business models and sourcing of materials depend on nature and biodiversity. Policy needs to provide the frameworks that enable companies to adopt models for consumption and production that support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. A biodiversity-friendly approach will generate goodwill with customers, bringing new commercial opportunities for all.

Links

The European Green Deal

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2201697-destruction-of-nature-is-as-big-a-threat-to-humanity-as-climate-change/#ixzz67LcfLAVb>

Are there good examples we can follow?

Many companies now recognise the importance of assessing, valuing and accounting for their impact and their dependence on natural capital and ecosystem services. They understand how this can help them assess financial risk, and equip them with a comprehensive sustainability metric for the 21st century.

The advantages for businesses include

- ✘ long-term viability of business models
- ✘ cost savings
- ✘ increases in operational efficiency
- ✘ increased market share
- ✘ access to new markets, products and services
- ✘ predictable and stable supply chains, and
- ✘ better relationships with stakeholders and customers.

Large companies are actively engaged in the nature-based solutions coalition that emerged from the Climate Action Summit in New York in 2019

European financial frontrunners are developing methodologies to measure their impacts at a portfolio level. The business and biodiversity platform includes a number of case studies from around Europe: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/business/index_en.htm

There are many good examples for environment policymakers to follow. Targeted conservation actions have often proved effective in Europe. The Iberian lynx, for example, has come back from the brink of extinction (from 52 individuals in 2002 to 327 in 2014), and also in Spain, the Imperial eagle has recovered from around 30 breeding pairs in the 1970s to over 300 pairs in 2011 – both with the help of the EU LIFE fund. Since 1992, the EU's LIFE fund has contributed over €3 billion to nature projects.

For more examples, see the Natura 2000 awards

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/awards/index_en.htm

For more examples about LIFE programme, see

<https://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm>

If you need more examples of nature-based solutions in action around Europe see <https://oppla.eu/nbs/case-studies>; for more examples from around the world see <https://nature4climate.org/nbs-case-studies/>

What is Europe doing to solve the problem?

- ✘ The European Green Deal sets the stage for the ambitious agenda we need
- ✘ Europe is leading the campaign for an ambitious deal in China next year
- ✘ A new European strategy to tackle biodiversity loss has been adopted
- ✘ The EU is a major supporter and donor to biodiversity protection projects around the globe

Europe's efforts to halt biodiversity loss above and below ground include a 2020 biodiversity strategy (Our Life Insurance, Our Natural Capital: an EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020), **a 2017 action plan** to improve its implementation (An Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy), and powerful legislation such as the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Water Framework Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

Although there have been limited successes to date in stopping biodiversity loss, the situation should change with the adoption of a new strategy.

The coming biodiversity strategy will contain ambitious and realistic commitments. Its key elements are more nature protection, an ambitious Nature Restoration Plan to restore healthy ecosystems and an enabling framework to spur transformative change. The aim is to encourage the integration of ecosystems and their services across all economic activities, in line with the principle of “do no harm” to biodiversity and climate.

Europe is aiming for world leaders to agree an ambitious global biodiversity framework to protect biodiversity. This will be the equivalent of the Paris 1.5° goal. This 15th meeting of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD COP 15) will review progress towards the world's current biodiversity targets, and raise the level of ambition for the next ten years.

The overall goal will be underpinned by national commitments on how to deliver on these objectives, a robust mechanism to monitor and review the strategy, and adequate steps for funding and capacity building. The agreement should also include ambitious and measurable objectives to address the state of biodiversity, the drivers of biodiversity loss, and key enablers such as funding and better knowledge.

Domestically, as part of the New Green Deal, Europe is making a firm commitment to three priorities in new biodiversity strategy including protecting biodiversity from future harm, restoring harm where it has already suffered, and ensuring that a concern for biodiversity is a central feature of all other relevant policy areas.

Internationally, the EU is a major supporter of biodiversity protection and the sustainable use of natural resources. It engages more than 350 million euros per year on biodiversity in developing countries through programmes directly focused on biodiversity and programmes on mainstreaming biodiversity in other sectors. E.g. in 2018, the EU funded 66 protected areas in 27 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Europe has a long-standing goal of halting global forest cover loss by 2030 at the latest and reducing gross tropical deforestation by 50% by 2020. EU free trade agreements include Trade and Sustainable Development chapters with provisions on environmental protection, climate change, biodiversity and forests, including an obligation to ensure that environmental agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity are implemented effectively.

Links

EU Green Deal https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

EU biodiversity strategy <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0244>

[The Natura 2000 network – https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm)

[EU nature legislation – https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/index_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/index_en.htm)

EU Action Plan

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/action_plan/communication_en.pdf

Some of Europe's development projects https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects-ground_en

What can I do personally?

- ✘ Talk about biodiversity loss
- ✘ Watch your consumption of resources
- ✘ Join a campaign to get better informed and help spread these ideas

Do not despair – take action! If you start with the small things, you will find it easier to progress to more ambitious steps. Start by talking about these problems with your family and your friends. Bring them up at work and at school. Researchers have shown that it only takes a small number of dedicated and peaceable individuals to bring about major social changes – sometimes only 3.5 percent!

Put pressure on policymakers – letters and emails can have a remarkable effect.

There are plenty of possibilities. Start by thinking about your own carbon footprint and what you can do to reduce it – insulating your home, rethinking your energy supply, and favouring sustainable forms of transport. Think about the clothes you buy, which ones you really need, and whether they need to be new. Think about your holidays – you might prefer spending more time in one place, as opposed to visiting many. And think about your money – is your bank using your investments in an environmentally responsible way?

Look out for products and services that have been awarded the EU Ecolabel, a label of environmental excellence that is awarded to products and services meeting high environmental standards throughout their life cycle.

When shopping for food, try to favour local and seasonal goods. That way you cut down on hidden CO₂ emissions from transport and storage. And if you can, buy organic – organic food contains fewer pesticides, it's usually fresher as it is locally sourced, it's kinder to the environment because organic farms are inherently more sustainable. And consider eating less meat – a well-balanced diet is much kinder to the environment.

Think about your consumption habits. Most biodiversity loss can be traced back to our demand for virgin resources such as timber and textiles. Are you part of that problem? If you favour the four 'r's – refuse, reduce, repair, recycle – you are already helping to fight biodiversity loss.

Links

https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/tips_en

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/brochures/biodiversity_tips/en.pdf

UNEP campaign about sustainable living

<https://medium.com/disruptive-design/introducing-the-anatomy-of-action-a-unep-x-unschool-collaboration-to-activate-sustainable-986f2ec847e0>

