

# EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION TO CONNECT WITH NATURE: A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Humankind's affinity to nature is threatened. Youth, in particular, are missing out. Without the connection, a love of nature cannot develop. Alienation leads to a loss of support for conservation of nature. Conservation has yielded an extensive network of parks and protected areas that in turn provide the opportunity to connect directly with nature. The opportunity presents itself for parks and protected areas to play an increasing and significant role in connecting people with nature. A next generation leadership, youth for youth, is needed to take up this challenge. Through understanding the needs and values of youth, parks and protected area leaders must offer programmes that connect young people to nature and empower young people to be agents of change. The 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress provides a launch pad for such collaborative efforts. Stream 8: Inspiring a New Generation, is focused on a legacy whereby future generations will develop and nurture life-long relationships with nature and the support for conservation that flows from that connection. Youth, National Park and Protected Area leaders are poised to build on the simple equation that LOVE of Nature + ACTION = CHANGE with the desired outcome of an enduring connection to nature.

**Key words:** Youth, new generation, protected areas, World Parks Congress

## INTRODUCTION

Humans have an affinity for nature. This love of nature termed 'biophilia' was defined by E. O. Wilson (1984, p. 58) as: "the urge to affiliate with other forms of life". We have evolved within and with nature. At the most basic of levels, we learned that plants and animals provided food, fibre and skins and so we tended them and cared for them. Our affiliation, however, goes deeper than addressing the biological necessities of life. Nature has provided spiritual, aesthetic, and philosophical pillars for the growth and expression of human culture (Haenn & Wilk, 2006).

Wilson (1984; 1993) has bemoaned that this historic and evolutionary tie of humans to nature is being eroded. In further work, Wilson (1993) highlighted that the loss of a connection to nature contributes to psychic deprivation and degradation of the human mind. Medical research has clearly identified the restorative values of nature in

patient recovery rates. A 2005 survey of eight European cities showed that residents having access to green areas are three times more apt to be active and 40 per cent less likely to be obese (Basaraba, 2012). Koss and Kingsley (2010) found that volunteers engaged in citizen science programmes in marine protected areas in Victoria, Australia not only connected with nature but also reported feelings of mental and physical wellbeing. Further, volunteers felt their monitoring efforts generated personal satisfaction through their contributions and increased feelings of enjoyment by connecting to nature and socialising with others. Further evidence supporting the assertion that contact with nature promotes health was summarised by Maller (2006), and Berman (2012) suggests that the brain relaxes in nature. A simple walk in nature could improve memory and mood in depressed people. In a natural setting the brain enters into a state of contemplative attention that is restorative or refreshing while in an



Chinese school children learning about their environment, Dongzhimen middle school, Beijing, China © Brent Stirton / Getty Images / WWF-UK

urban setting the brain is bombarded with distractions that force attention systems into a state of constant alertness. Experiencing nature has to be real, incorporating all the senses; virtual experiences alone are not enough, but can add to the awareness level of those who experience the real thing.

The rupture of our connection with the natural environment is caused by a number of factors that began with the growth of urbanisation in the world. It is harder for people to get to and experience natural places when the majority of the global population lives in urban settings. Three-quarters of the European population live in urban environments, while in North America and Australia, it is more than 80 per cent and similarly Colombia is over 75 per cent and South Africa is at 62 per cent (US Central Intelligence, 2012). The opportunity to connect with nature is frequently limited to the few city parks and other remnants of green spaces found within or adjacent to the world's urban spaces.

Urbanisation as a cause of disconnection with nature is compounded by permeating attitudes that preach fear of the unknown. The devaluation of nature in the media compounded by doomsday messages around losses of biodiversity and effects of climate change create a conscious and subconscious aversion to the outdoors. Wilderness has become feared as the place where wild beasts roam and is thus avoided (Nelson & Callicott, 2008).

Further, in the developing world, economic breakthroughs are creating a new well-off middle-class with urban values. In the developed world, immigrants

are becoming an increasingly large segment of the population. New immigrants often have little experience with nature or certainly the institution of protected areas. On arrival in their new country, their focus is on building up their economic status and providing for the well-being of their families and adjusting to new cultural realities (Buija 2008).

Perhaps the most significant reality that separates humanity from physically connecting and thus understanding and appreciating nature is prolonged screen time. TV, computers, tablets and smart phones, which dominate developed nations' use of the web, are drawing our attention away from the natural world that surrounds us. Estimates in Canada suggest children spend approximately five hours (Pimento & Kernerstedt, 2010) to as much as eight hours per day in front of audio visual screens (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2010). Medical professionals are suggesting that a limit of around two hours per day or less would assure better health, sleep and social skills. Spending sedentary time in front of a screen occurs at the expense of physical activity and exploration of the outdoors. The domination of screens in our daily lives influences our lifestyles, particularly amongst youth and young people, and has longer term repercussions. Research is linking limited physical activity among youth to increased rates of obesity, mental health disorders and undeveloped motor skills<sup>1</sup>.

The challenge of connecting youth to nature due to a paucity of opportunity to experience outdoors activity is further exacerbated by the disturbing trend where earning an undergraduate biology degree no longer

obligates a student to learn anything about actual living organisms (Frazer, 2014). Future natural history teachers may not have the connection and the biophilia for nature to transmit an appreciation of nature, let alone a passion for nature.

The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) has compiled an annotated bibliography listing research and studies that confirm the value and many benefits of connecting to nature. In response, decisions to increase youth connection to nature are being taken by a variety of people and organisations – including individuals, families, agencies, communities and nations – and producing significant results. An example is a New Zealand school that submitted itself to a University of Auckland and Otago University experiment (TVNZ, 2014). School children were given freedom during recess to play, run, slide, jump and climb. Instead of the feared chaos, teachers noted that the children were so engaged with their freedom, it resulted in a marked drop-off of bullying, serious injuries and vandalism (TVNZ, 2014). A further bonus derived was an increased level of concentration in class. This experiment demonstrates that connection to nature is integral to the mental and physical health and well-being of school children with co-benefits including social cohesion.

Although this paper encourages greater connection of young people to nature, locations available to experience nature are limited. In response to environmental and conservation challenges facing the world, global conventions, national policies, stricter regulations and legislation have all been brought into force over the past few decades. One common response was to establish national parks and other forms of protected areas. By 2020 the world has committed to having 17 per cent of the world's terrestrial and 10 per cent of the marine ecosystems under protection (CBD, 2010). These natural areas provide opportunity for connecting to nature, where a love for nature can be fostered. In addition to managing a growing parks estate, many park agencies are building programmes to encourage more people to visit parks and help build a connection with nature as detailed further in this paper.

However, individuals relate differently to nature's values depending on their culture and segment of society. For example, a common denominator to most of the world's religions is the recognition of the spiritual value of nature. Nevertheless, youth see the world differently from adults and connecting to nature needs to be appealing as well as relevant to them requiring their voice to inform our role as adults in assisting their connection to nature. To communicate the message that

nature's values are important must be personal and relevant for each community, be it faith, ethnicity or demographic. The value of nature and the importance of protecting it must be personalised, if not loved, before a constituency of support and connection will develop.

This paper is focused on reviewing the status of efforts in helping youth to connect with nature and exploring opportunities in the future. The IUCN World Parks Congress (WPC) 2014 in Sydney, Australia provides an opportunity to bring together efforts from five continents to focus on how to begin mending our rupture with nature and the specific role of protected areas. More importantly the WPC will serve as a launching platform for a worldwide movement led by youth to inspire, reconnect, and empower the next generation.

## STATUS

The global concern regarding the changes to childhood activity, connections to nature, and child safety has yielded the beginnings of a worldwide movement to transform this concern. A noted beginning was Nelson Mandela's opening address of the Durban, South Africa World Parks Congress in 2003 whereby he noted the absence of youth at the Congress and encouraged engagement of youth in nature conservation and protected areas. Subsequently, a few key events can be enumerated that have begun to address the concern:

1. During 2005, the Paul F-Brandwein Institute convened a Conservation Learning Summit (Brandwein, 2006). One of the summit's purposes was to look at these changes in childhood activities and the potential impact on natural resources and protected areas in the future. During the same year, the first edition of Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, was published and quickly acclaimed. Louv was a keynote speaker at the 2005 Conservation Learning Summit and brought attention to the growing worldwide issue of children's disconnect from nature. Louv had the looming vision of a future in which young professionals were prepared for conservation work by vicarious, not direct, experiences with natural ecosystems and protected areas.
2. In 2006, the World Future Society listed children's 'nature-deficit disorder' as a health threat among its top five trends to watch. "Children today are spending less time in direct contact with nature than did previous generations. The impacts are showing up not only in their lack of physical fitness but also in the growing prevalence of hyperactivity and attention deficit. Studies show that immersing children in



outdoor settings – away from television and video games – fosters more creative mental activity and concentration<sup>2</sup>.”

3. Richard Louv and others founded the international public charity, the C&NN in 2006. By the 2008 IUCN World Conservation Congress, a panel titled ‘Reversing a Worldwide Trend: Strategies for Solving Nature-Deficit Disorder’ was held on international efforts to address nature-deficit disorder among children and to feature global efforts and programmes to help reverse the growing trend. The C&NN has assembled and reviewed the evidence worldwide to support the need to reverse this trend (C&NN, 2012). The review makes clear that everyday experiences in nature throughout childhood provide many benefits to children’s health and well-being, and to the Earth itself. Further, evidence has shown that children who have exploratory, meaningful, and direct experiences in science and nature during their childhood tend to be those who commit their professional careers to being scientists and conservationists that are needed now and in the future (Brandwein, 1955; Fort, 2010). To further share this evidence, one indicator for the growth and support of the C&NN movement is reflected by the number of visits to the organisation’s website including interest from more than 200 nations, with over 100 nations downloading the free resources<sup>3</sup>. While attention to addressing this issue is growing, the need remains urgent to globally rally and further collaborative efforts to increase childhood experiences in nature.
4. At the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Nagoya in 2010, the IUCN Commission for Education and Communication (CEC), through its ‘Love-Not-Loss’ campaign, demonstrated that the spiritual, economic, aesthetic and health values we attribute to protected areas are all values that build on a love for nature. Developing such a bond strengthens one’s desire to commit to experience nature and protecting it (IUCN-CEC, 2012).
5. The effort to increase personal experiences in nature was furthered by leaders of protected areas attending the 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) in Jeju, Republic of Korea. Here, they agreed to embark on a global campaign dedicated to connecting people of all generations to nature. There was unanimous agreement to use their individual assets to make a new and strengthened engagement of people with nature whether at a local, cultural, national, regional, or global level. In addition, Congress Resolution 101 was passed in support of a child’s right to nature<sup>4</sup>. Also, to help demonstrate the evidence



**School children celebrating the declaration of a Marine Protected Area in Vanua Levu, Fiji © Brent Stirton / Getty Images**

base for the need for this global movement, C&NN and the IUCN CEC co-released the statement, *Children & Nature Worldwide: An Exploration of Children’s Experiences of the Outdoors and Nature with Associated Risks and Benefits* (C&NN, 2012) during the Congress.

6. Further to the above commitments, Parks Canada, with others, sponsored the 2012 WCC Resolution 045, ‘Broadening awareness of benefits and relevance of protected areas’<sup>4</sup>. This resolution calls for a broad recognition and appreciation of the central role played by protected areas in conservation. Moreover, the resolution encouraged protected area leaders to make a new and strengthened commitment to connect people with nature by actively collaborating with a full range of partners and stakeholders in order to inspire broad-based awareness, support, engagement and participation in conservation actions. The WPC provides an opportunity for leaders to come together and move these ideas forward, in addition to supporting and empowering up and coming young protected area leaders.

These key events are illustrative of the kind of partnerships leading to action that every protected area agency works hard to create in order to achieve a supportive constituency. The strength of these relationships, and the social capital created, is of benefit during times of adversity, where agencies can rely on this support for their mission and vision. For the most part, the core of this constituency consists of people with a strong affinity for nature and its protection and/or those who have an economic as well as social-cultural dependence on protected areas. However, the growth of this core constituency is being affected by changing global demographics.

The world's population is growing, predicted to reach nine billion by 2040. In the developed world, the mean age is increasing while the opposite is true in developing countries. In both situations, the population is increasingly becoming urban and with it their experience and affinity for nature is being eroded and replaced by technologically-based realities and other daily priorities that detract from spending time in nature.

Protected area agencies have begun to reach out to these new constituencies, readdressing their tools and mechanisms to increase their connection and relationships with those who may not initially consider time in nature to be of priority. However, the rate of change of global demographics presents a challenge that is overwhelming for one agency to tackle alone. By collaborating and cooperating with each other and external partners, agencies could provide a strong force to broaden the public sphere's understanding of nature's values, the critical role that parks and protected areas play in protecting these values and how nature's values provide a range of health and well-being benefits for humans.

## GOING FORWARD

Traditionally, supporters of nature and protected areas can trace their commitment to a personal experience with nature that some might call an epiphany. The experience, be it through a family camping trip, or an encounter with wildlife or an engaging interpreter or teacher, opened them to an understanding of the importance of nature to their own life and life in general.

The challenge for all protected areas agencies and others that strive to protect nature is to find ways of stirring this critical human connection with nature. This challenge calls for a major shift from the traditional information-based communication to messages based on values and emotions related to protected areas in general and direct

experiences in nature. To inspire people's support of nature and the vision and mission of the world's protected areas, we need to facilitate experiential knowledge that will lead to a personal commitment. Additionally, we need programmes and initiatives that are developed and led by youth for youth. Through understanding the needs and values of youth, we can design in collaboration with them successful programmes that connect young people to nature. Concurrently, there are many engaged, motivated and knowledgeable young professionals within the IUCN Commission groups and beyond who are trailblazing initiatives that include running organisations, researching and implementing programmes often in a voluntary capacity with little funding and support. It is important here to highlight that support and resources, financial and human, are needed for young people to create change in the long term and to become future protected area leaders.

The above areas have considerable growth potential and opportunity and will be discussed and explored at the WPC. The following outlines the approach being taken by organisers of the Stream 8: Inspiring New Generations at the Congress and thereafter to support initiatives and programmes for young people and young professionals.

### 1. 'Inspiring a New Generation' (ING) – Stream 8

This stream is focused on a legacy whereby future generations will develop and nurture life-long relationships with nature. The goal is to empower the growth and expansion of the emerging worldwide movement by inspiring people, especially young people, around the world to experience, connect with, love, value, and conserve nature. The stream will bring voices of young people to the Congress. It will broaden the ability of park agencies to reach children, youth and urban audiences through partnerships, new media and innovative programming. Through the inclusion of young people at this Congress, this stream will build a legacy of youth leadership and intergenerational partnerships for parks, people and planet.

This initiative will also deliver on CBD Aichi Target 1, 'people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably' (CBD, 2010). Further, consistent with IUCN WCC 2012 Resolution 008, the IUCN has committed to promoting and empowering a diverse new generation of young leaders from around the world through intergenerational partnerships that can meet the complex challenges we are facing in cultivating 'a just, sustainable and peaceful world'<sup>4</sup>.

Park agencies, conservation organisations, along with proactive youth are well positioned and prepared to take a leadership role in many ways – including inspiring a new generation. Protected area managers, in particular, with their responsibility for the protection of areas with exceptional natural values and a mandate and expertise to reach the public, are best placed to set out a path of discovery by which the next generation can experience, learn about, and care for nature.

To achieve this Stream's goal of 'Inspiring a New Generation', the following objectives will be met at the conclusion of the Congress<sup>5</sup>:

- Establish and lay the groundwork for growing a global community of organisations that share an interest, capacity and mandate to connect people to nature.
  - Release a global action plan with examples of cross cutting tools ranging across communications including social media, technology, citizen science, urban gateways to nature, tourism and innovative partnerships that can help direct the growth of this global movement.
  - Bring the voice of young people and participation across the entire Congress programme.
  - Build capacity and share innovative best practices in connecting people with nature, including engaging new partners and sectors of society.
  - Engage young people from around the world to share knowledge, experiences and perspectives, build capacity, take leadership and inspire others to connect with nature through protected areas, together and through intergenerational partnerships.
  - Demonstrate, using evidenced-based information, the vital need, barriers and motivators to connect people to nature, and support the social science community to build this knowledge base.
  - Develop and deliver a *Young Peoples Pact* and an Internship Charter by young people as part of the greater Congress legacy, *The Sydney Promise*.
- eBird (ebird.org). Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales. It is a real-time, online checklist programme, that has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. eBird is amassing one of the largest and fastest growing biodiversity data resources in existence. In March 2012 alone, participants reported more than 3.1 million bird observations across North America! In time these data will become the foundation for a better understanding of bird distribution across the western hemisphere and beyond.
  - Encyclopedia of Life (eol.org/). The Encyclopedia of Life is an easy-to-search and freely available compendium of natural history information with over 1.3 million pages on thousands of species from around the world. The contents are contributed by members, including the lay public, and reviewed by curators.
  - FeederWatch (feederwatch.org). Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centres, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broad-scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance.
  - FishBase. (www.fishbase.org/). FishBase is an international online database of the world's fishes. This collaborative effort bridges ecological, genetic, zoological, biogeographical, conservation, and commercial information. It is commonly cited in peer-reviewed literature and used as a management tool.
  - Map of Life. (www.mol.org/). The Map of Life is a global collection of species-distribution data, currently housing over 365 million records from almost 800,000 species and providing mapping tools and area-specific species lists for anywhere on the globe. The Map of Life is designed to provide a platform and tool set for the development and analysis of species-distribution maps across all taxa.
  - Vital Signs. (vitalsigns.org/). Integrating ecosystem service and biodiversity monitoring from an agricultural perspective at local to continental scales, Vital Signs uses standardised, targeted collections of natural history information to build

## 2. Opportunities to connect – citizen science

Personal connections are critical to a better understanding of nature but such connections can also lead to global contributions and a better understanding by others. Citizen science (i.e. scientific research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur or nonprofessional scientists) is one tool that crosses over to include use of technology, social media and innovative partnerships through which contributions can be made and one's experience and knowledge of nature expanded. Examples include:



**New Canadians participating in Parks Canada's Learn to Camp programme. Fort Beauséjour-Fort Cumberland National Historic Site of Canada, New Brunswick © Parks Canada.**

explicit links between biodiversity and human well-being.

- **USA National Phenology Network.** ([www.usanpn.org/](http://www.usanpn.org/)). The USA National Phenology Network is a national clearinghouse for data sets focused on the timing of events in nature, from blooming times in plants to migration timing in animals. The platform hosts citizen science projects, curates global data on phenology, and organises phenological research for a wide range of applications.
- **Youth Learning as Citizen Environmental Scientists (YLACES).** Youth Learning as Citizen Environmental Scientists aims to assist and reward the implementation of inquiry-based, experiential science education where students do science and contribute to understanding of our natural world.
- **Sea Search.** ([www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/get-involved/volunteer/sea-search](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/get-involved/volunteer/sea-search)). Parks Victoria, Australia works with community and school groups to monitor Victoria's Marine National Parks and Marine Sanctuaries. Using scientific methods trialled with community groups, data collected aids the Agency in managing their marine front yards.
- **Reef Life Survey.** ([www.reeflifesurvey.com](http://www.reeflifesurvey.com)). This programme brings scientists and experienced and motivated recreational SCUBA divers together to scientifically survey rocky and coral reefs. The aim of this programme is to improve biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of marine resources across 40 countries.
- **iNaturalist.** ([www.inaturalist.org](http://www.inaturalist.org)). iNaturalist is a place where one can record what one sees in nature, meet other nature lovers, and learn about the natural world. From hikers to hunters, birders to beach-combers, the world is filled with naturalists. INaturalist provides a space for all those observations to be shared online.
- **Questabird.** ([www.questabird.com](http://www.questabird.com)). QuestaBird is an outdoor adventure game based in Australia where players compete by photographing birds in the wild. Participants can join quests, earn gold, buy supplies, gain levels, build collections and help document and protect Australia's biodiversity.
- **Atlas of Living Australia.** ([www.ala.org.au](http://www.ala.org.au)). The Atlas of Living Australia contains information on all the known species in Australia aggregated from a wide range of data providers: museums, herbaria, community groups, government departments, individuals and universities.
- **Great Nature Project.** ([www.greatnatureproject.org](http://www.greatnatureproject.org)). One of the largest initiatives National Geographic has ever undertaken, inviting people from around the world to appreciate nature by taking pictures of plants and animals and then sharing those pictures with the world.





Discovering the old oak woodlands of the Quantock Hills, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, England © Equilibrium Research

### 3. Opportunities to connect – social media

Although new technologies have been described in this paper as one cause for a disconnect with nature, we are also increasingly seeing social media being used as one mechanism to connect people with nature. One example is the youth-led '#NoWallsOutHere'<sup>6</sup>, which promotes the sharing of personal experiences in nature through social media. Protected area managers and agencies acknowledge that social media is one powerful tool and mechanism out of a suite of tools and mechanisms that can be applied to reach out to new constituencies. However, how to best message a mission, vision, actions and images needs an understanding of how best to operationalise social media to ensure efforts are targeted and effective. To address this need, this Stream will provide the following learning and development opportunities to all Congress participants:

- Social Media Capacity Development Workshop: Social media professionals will deliver this interactive workshop that includes describing

different social media applications and their purpose, how to create targeted and effective messaging and assessing the impact of your communication.

- Young Social Media Coalition: This group of 20 young people attending the Congress will focus on disseminating the young peoples' voice across all Congress streams and cross-cutting themes through social media.
- iAct Dialogues for Sustainability: This is a series of global webinars where 'I' stands for intergenerational, interactive, insightful and inspirational with a focus on action, literally 'I act for sustainability'. There will be a series of iAct Dialogues, pre-Congress, during Congress and post-Congress. This series of webinars will allow young people to share their ideas and experiences related to nature and protected areas. It allows those who are not able to make it to Congress to connect and create action<sup>7</sup>.



#### 4. Role of protected areas and agencies

Outside of the work taking place at the WPC, the world's protected areas and the agencies/organisations which represent them are an essential part of the solution, which is, connecting people of all ages to nature. Protected areas presently encompass some 15 per cent of the globe and, according to the commitment of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, this is projected to increase to 17 per cent of terrestrial systems and 10 per cent of marine systems by 2020.

Protected areas conserve intact natural areas and governing agencies along with community and indigenous managers encourage visitation and offer interpretive services that provide the opportunities, particularly for urban countries, to come into contact with nature, experience the wonders of nature, and develop an appreciation for nature. The protected areas of the world provide the space and opportunity for families to bond, children to play, and communities to meet. They lie at the heart of all efforts to forge a renewed relationship with nature.

Many protected area agencies and organisations have understood this need and implemented programmes of work to address their responsibility in connecting people of all ages to nature. Some examples of actions and programmes currently taking place include:

- Parks Canada: has launched a 'learn to camp' initiative to introduce urban dwellers to camping as an activity through which connections with nature can develop.
- Korea Parks Service: reached an agreement in 2012 with Nonghyup Bank to cooperate in building awareness of nature through protected areas.
- US National Park Service: is cooperating with medical professionals in a Washington, DC programme prescribing parks to patients as a means of improving their well-being while also beginning to appreciate the value of nature.
- South Africa's SANParks: has launched a 'Kids in Parks' Programme that provides a unique opportunity to visit a national park and learn a lot about natural and cultural heritage.
- EUROPARC: participated in the European Union 'Youth in Action' programme aimed to enhance opportunities for young people to participate in Junior Ranger activities and new youth environmental education programmes in protected areas.
- Australia's New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service: have an extensive range of programmes designed to engage new audiences,

young people in particular, in nature. The 'Wilderquest' website<sup>8</sup> and phone app is designed to establish a lifelong connection to nature through taking kids on a journey from the digital environment to the natural world.

- Australia's Parks Victoria: conducts Discovery Programs where rangers interact with the public through hands on interpretation and activities in the parks. The Junior Ranger Program is specifically for 6-12 year olds and is all about having hands-on fun outdoor activities while learning about nature and how parks protect native animals and plants and bring well-being to people.

#### 5. Role of the IUCN Commissions

IUCN CEC pioneered the concept and practice of the Intergenerational Partnership for Sustainability (IPS), launched at the UNESCO Tbilisi+30 Conference in Ahmedabad, India in 2007. In 2008, the CEC Steering Committee took leadership for the meaningful engagement of young professionals across all Commissions. A joint CEC and WCPA Steering Committee meeting in Ecuador in 2009 solidified the concept for a cross-Commission Task Force, where CEC and WCPA young professionals were instrumental in pushing for representation of a young professional, Grace Mwaura, in the IUCN Council.

IUCN WCPA recognizes the importance of protected areas as conduits to nature for visitors; including virtual visitors. Tourism and protected areas form a symbiotic relationship that is fostered by the IUCN WCPA Tourism Specialist Group. However, WCPA only began to focus on the need to reconnect the next generation to nature shortly after the joint CEC WCPA meeting in Ecuador. Subsequently, WCPA and a dozen World Protected Area Leaders met in Colombia which launched the process leading up to the WPC Stream 8: Inspiring a New Generation. Along the way, WCPA and CEC collaborated with Futerra and the Korea Parks Service to deliver the Jeju Declaration noted above that commits attendees to a global campaign dedicated to connecting people of all generations to nature.

At the 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress, the Council formalised the Task Force on Intergenerational Partnership for Sustainability (IPS) with a mandate to increase youth engagement and intergenerational partnerships vertically and horizontally across the IUCN. Titled Resolution 008: *Increasing youth engagement and intergenerational partnership across and through the Union*, ensures there is a platform for the young voice and support for their new and emerging ideas and actions<sup>4</sup>. The IPS Task Force supports the efforts,



**Giving an outdoor environmental lesson to a group of village children at the Environmental Education Centre at Lake Malawi National Park © Sandra Mbanefo Obiogo / WWF-Canon**

activities and work of existing IUCN Commission Young Professional groups, such as the WCPA Young Professionals (WCPA YP) who are co-leading the Inspiring a New Generation Stream.

## CONCLUSION

Although global efforts are currently in motion to connect youth to nature, greater momentum is needed for there to be a large shift in which youth value and connect to parks. What is often missing from this conversation is the youth voice, an essential requirement for change to happen at a large scale. By collaborating and empowering the youth and young professionals of the world in decision making and planning through open and transparent dialogue, park agencies and organisations, protected area managers and the IUCN Commissions will be able to catalyze a critical mass of youth in the public sphere to engage with nature and embrace and support successful initiatives that help them do so.

By supporting, participating and investing in initiatives that are relevant to and led by youth, park and protected area leaders along with their supporters can build on the simple equation that LOVE of Nature + ACTION = CHANGE with the desired outcome being connected to nature in every way.

## NOTES

The Inspiring a New Generation Stream of the 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress is being co-led by Parks Canada, the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), the IUCN WCPA Young Professionals, the IUCN Task Force on Intergenerational Partnership for Sustainability, and the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See for example: [www.takethemagicstep.com/coaching/families/training-exercise/benefits-of-exercise-for-children/](http://www.takethemagicstep.com/coaching/families/training-exercise/benefits-of-exercise-for-children/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.wfs.org/node/569](http://www.wfs.org/node/569)

<sup>3</sup> [www.childrenandnature.org/](http://www.childrenandnature.org/)

<sup>4</sup> [cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/resolutions\\_and\\_recommendations\\_2012.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/resolutions_and_recommendations_2012.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [worldparkscongress.org/programme/stream\\_inspiring\\_a\\_new\\_generation.html](http://worldparkscongress.org/programme/stream_inspiring_a_new_generation.html)

<sup>6</sup> [www.facebook.com/hashtag/nowallsouthere](http://www.facebook.com/hashtag/nowallsouthere)

<sup>7</sup> [www.sustainabilityleadersnetwork.org/iact-dialogues-for-sustainability/](http://www.sustainabilityleadersnetwork.org/iact-dialogues-for-sustainability/)

<sup>8</sup> [wilderquest.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal/](http://wilderquest.nsw.gov.au/aboriginal/)

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## RESUMEN

La afinidad de la humanidad con la naturaleza se encuentra amenazada. La juventud, en particular, la está perdiendo. Sin la conexión, es imposible desarrollar el amor por la naturaleza. La desafección conduce a una pérdida de apoyo para la conservación de la naturaleza. La conservación ha dado lugar a una extensa red de parques y áreas protegidas que a su vez brindan la oportunidad de conectar directamente con la naturaleza. Los parques y las áreas protegidas pueden desempeñar un papel cada vez más importante para conectar a las personas con la naturaleza. Para afrontar este reto es necesario el liderazgo de la siguiente generación, de los jóvenes para los jóvenes. A través del entendimiento de las necesidades y los valores de la juventud, los responsables de los parques y las áreas protegidas deben ofrecer programas para conectar a los jóvenes con la naturaleza y empoderarlos para convertirse en agentes de cambio. El Congreso Mundial de Parques 2014 de la UICN proporciona una plataforma para impulsar estos esfuerzos de colaboración. El tema 8, “Inspirar a una nueva generación”, se centra en un legado gracias al cual las generaciones futuras desarrollarán y cultivarán relaciones de largo plazo con la naturaleza y con el apoyo a la conservación que se deriva de esa conexión. Los jóvenes líderes de los parques nacionales y las áreas protegidas están preparados para construir sobre la simple fórmula en base a la cual el AMOR por la Naturaleza + ACCIÓN = CAMBIO a favor de la conexión permanente con la naturaleza.

## RESUME

L'affinité de l'humanité avec la nature est menacée. Les jeunes particulièrement en sont exclus. L'amour de la nature ne peut se développer sans une relation avec elle. Cette lacune conduit à un défaut de soutien à la conservation de la nature. La conservation a engendré un vaste réseau de parcs et de zones qui fournissent à leur tour la possibilité de se rapprocher de la nature. L'occasion se présente pour les parcs et les aires protégées de jouer un rôle croissant et significatif dans l'établissement d'une relation entre l'homme et la nature. Une nouvelle génération de leaders, des jeunes s'adressant à d'autres jeunes, est nécessaire pour relever ce défi. Grâce à une meilleure compréhension des besoins et des valeurs de la jeunesse, les gestionnaires des parcs et des aires protégées doivent offrir des programmes qui relient les jeunes à la nature et leur permettent de se faire des acteurs du changement. Le Congrès mondial sur les parcs de l'UICN en 2014 fournit un tremplin pour ces efforts mutuels. Le 8ème thème du congrès, intitulé «Pour inspirer une nouvelle génération», est centré sur un héritage grâce auquel les générations futures pourront développer et entretenir des relations durant toute leur vie avec la nature, et sur le soutien à la conservation qui en découle. La jeunesse, les gestionnaires des parcs nationaux et des aires protégées sont prêts à se fonder sur cette simple équation : AMOUR de la nature + ACTION = CHANGEMENT obtenant ainsi l'effet souhaité d'un lien durable avec la nature.