



## EDITORS' POSTSCRIPT

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This special issue of PARKS is a unique assembly of knowledge at a unique moment in time. The lessons drawn here about the relationship between COVID-19 and the natural world should be quickly learnt and acted upon. The year 2021 represents a narrow window for change.

These are the lessons from the papers we have had the honour to edit:

- the pandemic arose because a dangerous virus was allowed to spill over from wildlife into human populations;
- this was most likely because of the way we have abused and misused the natural world; and
- a local epidemic went global in a matter of weeks because of the interconnected world that we have created.

And these are the overarching messages we extract from the information we gathered:

- set against the billions of dollars that has been spent on dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, and the trillions more that will be spent to get economies moving again, the cost of securing the natural world through an effective system of protected and conserved areas is but a small fraction of that expenditure;
- if the same amount of effort that has been put — with magnificent success and in record time — into the development of vaccines to combat the disease, were to be applied to dealing with the root causes of zoonotic pandemics, we could drastically reduce the threat of future events of this kind; and
- if the shock of COVID-19 is not enough to make humanity wake up to the suicidal consequences of the destructive course of much misguided development, then it is hard to see how further calamities — far worse than the current pandemic — can be avoided.

During the coming year, governments and others will be gathering in a series of international meetings to decide how to stabilise our climate, save biodiversity, secure human health and revive the global economy. Through all these events should run this golden thread: **learn the lessons of COVID-19 by protecting nature and restoring damaged ecosystems.**

This is the mission that all with the power to bring about change must now pursue.