

[Key role for biodiversity in the battle against poverty and climate change](#)

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Nature's riches can play a major role in poverty eradication, but only if governments and businesses recognise the true economic value of the goods and services our environment provides us. That's the central message of a free book published today by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), BirdLife International and Pavan Sukhdev — leader of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study. It warns that biodiversity loss is not only an environmental problem but also a fundamental threat to people's livelihoods, wellbeing and ability to confront the impacts of climate change.

The full colour publication — which is written in clear, engaging language and aimed at policymakers, journalists and the general public — comes on the eve of the world's biggest international conference on biodiversity, in Nagoya, Japan. “The ongoing decline of the world's biological resources — such as rainforests, coral reefs and agricultural biodiversity — threatens to increase poverty and people's vulnerability to climate change”, said Dr Dilys Roe, a senior researcher at IIED. “These challenges must be tackled together rather than in isolation.”

The book shows how nature provides humanity with goods and services worth trillions of dollars. But it warns that these benefits are threatened by policies that fail to treat the environment and human wellbeing as two sides of the same coin.

Biodiversity includes the crops we eat and the insects that pollinate them; the plants we use for both traditional medicines and modern drugs; the bacteria that help create the soil that sustains farming; and the microscopic plankton at the base of food chains that end with fish on our dinner plates. It includes ecosystems such as forests that regulate water supplies and the global climate. While millions of the world's poorest people depend heavily on nature for their livelihoods, efforts to use biodiversity to boost incomes often fail — because of poor policies and legal frameworks that govern how biological resources are used and by whom.

“Systems that communities have developed over generations to sustainably manage their natural resources have often been swept aside by policies that favour short-term commercial gains”, said David Thomas, BirdLife International's Head of Communities and Livelihoods. “By supporting these communities' long-term stewardship of the land and the sea, policymakers can tackle two urgent global issues — extreme poverty and the loss of biodiversity — at the same time.”

The book outlines the economic, scientific and moral arguments for shifting to a new way of managing the Earth's resources that brings benefits to all in a sustainable way.

It argues that biological resources can lift people out of poverty and help countries to build green economies but says that for this to happen the true value of biodiversity must be included in economic valuations and government policies. Next week, governments from around the world will gather in Nagoya, Japan for the 10th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. They are set to make key decisions that could determine whether current and future generations continue to benefit from nature's riches.

To download the book “Banking on biodiversity: a natural way out of poverty” in PDF format [click here](#) (3.95MB)