



## The *Sanctuary* Interview Meet Harvey Locke

Harvey Locke, Co-founder of the Nature Needs Half Movement and of Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, speaks to friend and colleague **Vance G. Martin**, President of WILD Foundation (USA), Wilderness Foundation Global (South Africa), and Founder-Co-Chair of the Wilderness Specialist Group of the World Commission on Protected areas (IUCN).

**You are one of the core founders of the Nature Needs Half movement, and you have reported on it before to Sanctuary readers. Because the 11<sup>th</sup> World Wilderness Congress (WWC; WILD11) will convene at the fabulous location of Jaipur, Rajasthan, in March 2020, and NNH will be one of several core elements in WILD11's drive for solutions. Could you please summarise it again?**

Nature Needs Half is a global movement to protect at least half the world –

land and ocean – in an interconnected way so that we can turn around the environmental crisis that faces humanity and rest of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is an optimistic vision that is deeply rooted in the belief that we can have a positive future for our children and grandchildren if we transform our relationship with nature from one of exploitation to one of citizenship, where we live in community with the rest of life.

**What does it mean that NNH is a "movement"? How is this different**

**from ways that other organisations launch and manage projects?**

A movement is a shared idea that enters the public consciousness and supported by a wide community. It is different from a campaign, which an individual or organisation drives and often brands as a strategy to get more resources to support their work. With movements, as long as people are aligned with the core idea, they are free to use their own means to spread the word and get the job done. All big ideas that have changed

the world have worked like that – and Nature Needs Half is a big idea about how to save the world.

**Why is NNH relevant at this particular time in our world?**

We have a big problem that requires big solutions. Humanity is busily unravelling the beautiful tapestry of life through habitat destruction, over-hunting/ consumption and over-fishing. We are also changing the chemical composition of the world's oceans through burning fossil fuels and nitrogen run-off. We are rapidly changing the climate through habitat destruction, releasing the carbon stored in nature, and burning the ancient carbon stored in fossil fuels. Protecting nature 'at scale' is a very large part of the solution to these three inter-related problems and science says it requires protecting at least half the world in an interconnected way.

**Which countries or regions demonstrate this the best?**

Bhutan is an inspiration to the Nature Needs Half Movement. They have rightly protected over half the land in

their country. Protecting representative examples of all of their diverse ecoregions: from the lowlands of the Brahmaputra at just over 70 m. in elevation, moving up through rich primary forests and on to the high Himalaya above 7000 m. they have interconnected the whole system with movement corridors for animals. The only big thing that remains for them to do is to ensure they leave some rivers running wild throughout their length. On the marine side, Palau has created the Palau National Marine Sanctuary, which at 500,000 sq. km. covers 80 per cent of its national waters and is one of the largest Protected Areas in the world.

China, through its new Ecological Red Line conservation policy will protect 25 per cent of land by the end of this year, with more to come. This is a major turnaround from widespread degradation in the 1990s and is part of a drive towards creating an eco-civilisation. In South America, Chile recently created many new national parks on land and marine Protected

Areas in the sea. We are seeing exciting things in Colombia too.

**Is such a vision and practice relevant to India, or even possible?**

I think Nature Needs Half is highly relevant to both India and the entire Indian subcontinent. A few years ago, I wrote an article for *Sanctuary Asia* (the Vol. No. 2, February 2014, Cover story) in which I shared some thoughts on why India is physically and culturally well-suited to be a leader in the Nature Needs Half movement.

There are three regions of the subcontinent where this scale of conservation is feasible: the Deccan Plateau, the Western Ghats and the Himalaya. In the case of the Western Ghats, a study done in 2011 by Indian experts called for 60 per cent of the Western Ghats to be protected in a way that would create an interconnected system for the movement of animals throughout the mountains. In the Himalaya, we already have the example of Bhutan. Ecological restoration combined with the well-protected



ABOVE A bird's eye view of a river at Umfolozi Park, South Africa. Habitats such as these, says Harvey Locke, are being unraveled through habitat destruction, over-hunting, consumption and over-fishing.

FACING PAGE Harvey scouting the region beside Banff National Park for potential bison habitat. Wiped out in the 1800s by rampant hunting, in 2017 sixteen bisons, the first to roam the region in over a century, were introduced to the park in an effort to revive the population.

system in Nepal makes it possible to imagine it there too. It is also possible to create conditions in the Indian Himalaya. But the dam building spree has to be curtailed, because free-flowing mountain rivers are the ecological heart of the system. On the Deccan Plateau linking-up reserves for tigers and elephants could be done but I am less familiar with it so I would defer to others on how best to do that.

On the cultural side, I am inspired by India's constitution, which creates a duty on every citizen to safeguard the rivers and forests of India. While

I am not blind to the many problems that exist in India, I can affirm that it remains one of the world's great wildlife-viewing destinations. I often tell global audiences that humans can live in great density and still keep wild nature intact using India as an example. It did not happen by accident and it will not persist without further and more ambitious conservation actions.

#### **What about nature conservation in the other parts of India that have far more human use?**

All parts of Nature matter but Nature Needs Half does not work everywhere.

In some places like the Ganges floodplain with huge populations in cities and heavy agriculture, this scale of conservation is inconceivable; in other places like the Amazon and the boreal forest of Canada, to only protect half is far too little.

This "one size does not fit all" problem is a challenge for any effort to set global conservation targets. Whether we are talking about the current global Aichi Targets (under the UN Convention on Biodiversity), which call for protection of 17 per cent of land and 10 per cent marine areas, or more ambitious targets like 30 or 50 per cent of the world, this is an issue. But from many studies and experience, percentage targets definitely stimulate conservation action. There is widespread agreement they must be higher than "17 and 10." This issue is very much on the mind of global conservationists.

To get to the challenge of effective and realistic global conservation targets, the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas created a Beyond the Aichi Targets Task Force at the 2016 World Conservation Congress. I was appointed Chair. We were given the daunting task of finding a global consensus on how to scale up conservation to save nature and to encourage all the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to implement such ambition when they meet in Kunming China in 2020. We were specifically directed to address the "one size does not fit all" concern. After three years of consulting experts from around the world we developed the Three Global Conditions for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use, which sets different conservation strategies for different conditions.

#### **What are the Three Global Conditions for conservation?**

Considering how humans use the world and what is left of nature, we found the world's land is currently in three broad conditions: about 18 per cent of the earth's land is used for cities and farms, about 56 per cent is what we call shared lands and 26 per cent is in large wild areas. Nature Needs Half was derived from scientific studies of shared land areas, which cover more than half the world. But for the other two conditions we need a different approach.

In cities and farmlands, we need to save whatever fragments of nature

remain, so percentage targets are not necessarily useful. We need to protect endangered species and engage in ecological restoration to reconnect and expand the fragments. We need to control use of nitrogen to keep it out of rivers, protect pollinators, control urban sprawl to keep good farmland in production and give city dwellers access to nature. We need to keep large wild areas intact, as they are often home to indigenous people who live traditional nature-dependent lifestyles based in whole or, in part on those wilderness values. India has a few areas in this last category but the wildest part of the Nilgiri Hills and the *Toda* people might be an example. We need to retain these big areas as they are now, not fragment them down to 50 per cent. Their peatland and forests are critical for storing carbon. And rainforests of the Amazon and Congo basins must be kept whole in order to continue generating the rain that keeps them growing and waters crops elsewhere.

#### **So how do these very different conditions of the world impact ideas like Nature Needs Half?**

The Three Conditions framework is agnostic as to percentage targets. It applies no matter what they are. Interestingly, if you were to aggregate the conservation required across all three conditions, it comes to about half the world, so the simple message of Nature Needs Half holds at a global scale.

#### **What role do Indigenous Peoples play in today's conservation movement?**

Many traditional indigenous peoples understand that we humans are just one part of a marvelously interconnected and animate world, not the centre of the universe. This latter perception so dominant in the West and now taking hold in other cultures is the source of a lot of our environmental problems. Keeping that indigenous value system in place in intact ecosystems is in everyone's interest as they have and will continue to steward such areas well. They can also inform our world view elsewhere. The understanding that humans are one species among many that shares the world with others lines up really well with the findings of modern biology and other sciences. The sciences have shown that we are stardust that has evolved to share the world with other organisms interacting with abiotic processes.



Harvey stresses that we need to keep large wild areas such as the Banff National Park intact, protect endangered species and engage in ecological restoration to reconnect and expand fragmented habitats.

**You and I launched Nature Needs Half at the 9<sup>th</sup> WWC (WILD9) in Mexico, when no conservation organisation was thinking like this, and we received considerable push-back from the larger institutions. The necessity and understanding of the NNH vision and practice has come a long way since then. What role do you see it playing at WILD11 in Rajasthan in March 2020?**

Nature Needs Half can be the central organising principle of the conservation agenda at WILD11. But it is only one dimension of what we need to be talking about. A big reason that I have been so involved with these WILD congresses over the 16 years is that they are unique conservation events. We get into the arts and into the spirit of things, open our hearts to ask the big questions about what kind of world we want to live in and openly celebrate our shared love of nature and humanity. I am very enthused by the theme of *WILD11: For Life, Livelihoods, and Love*.

I am also excited that WILD 11 will be in India because I think the basic

indigenous and scientific perceptions I mentioned have a lot in common with Hinduism, Jainism and the secular constitution of India.

India has something to teach the world about how we should all relate to nature. Rabindranath Tagore put it beautifully one hundred years ago when he compared the western attitude that humans are the only thing that matter in this world to the more generous Indian world view: "India intuitively felt that the essential fact of this world has a vital meaning for us; we have to be fully alive to it and establish a conscious relation with it, not merely impelled by scientific curiosity or greed of material advantage, but realising in the spirit of sympathy, with a large feeling of joy and peace." I hope at WILD11 we can help Indians remember this deeply-rooted cultural perception is actually the correct way of seeing the world and that Indians live in one of the world's very special places full of wonderful living things, deserving both their love and protection. 🌱



**TOP AND ABOVE** After a long career in law, Harvey turned to his love of conservation and photography. Captured here by Harvey are Canada's Mount Assiniboine, located on the British Columbia/Alberta border and Tunnel Mountain, called Sleeping Buffalo due to its shape, as viewed from the north and east.