My Green Pod .COM

COP30 SPECIAL ISSUE

ALL EYES ON BELÉM



SACRED SOUNDS IN THE AMAZON
The World's First Concert for Nature will unite artists, researchers and Indigenous elders in the Amazon

AVOIDING A COP-OUT WITH EARTHDAY.ORG
Ahead of COP30, Sarah T. Davies from EARTHDAY.ORG is 'calling time on the climate bluffers'

BOSH! RECIPES
Plant-based cooks Henry and Ian share two COP30 recipes that will give you a taste of Brazil

THE PEARL OF AFRICA
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Welcome to My Green Pod Magazine!



Katie Hill, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
katie@mygreenpod.com

This November (10-21), world leaders will convene in Belém, Brazil for COP30, the annual climate change conference. A new highway, cutting through the rainforest, will accommodate the journeys of thousands of additional attendees – from charities, NGOs, media organisations and others – who feel that 'showing up' (via long-haul flight) is their most powerful tool. Sometimes, stepping aside can be a more powerful gesture.

Those most affected by the impacts of a changing climate will not be flying to Brazil. It's unlikely they'll know that COP30 is taking place. Instead, they will be battling on the front lines of the climate crisis, where increasingly unpredictable weather events are adding new risks while compounding and multiplying the threats that already haunt their everyday lives.

At the end of October, Hurricane Melissa caused widespread devastation across the Caribbean, displacing communities, wrecking infrastructure and demanding an urgent humanitarian response in Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas.

50,000 people will not choose to fly to the Caribbean to support recovery efforts and ensure those affected can access food, clean water and maternal and sexual health services, or that women and girls receive protection against gender-based violence in shelters and communities.

Instead, many will take to stages in Brazil and attend photo ops in the Amazon – great fodder for Instagram and TikTok – then programme ChatGPT to write heartfelt, human accounts of their experiences.

In some cases ownership, appearance and content are grotesquely prioritised over compassion, empathy and real-life action on the injustices that are unfolding before us.

Everyone has skills to bring to the conversation and everyone's voice matters, but we all have a responsibility to think, deeply, about how we can best serve those who most need help. Today.



ABOUT US

My Green Pod is an independent, family-run UK business, founded by Katie Hill and Jarvis Smith. We want to share the real stories behind the brands and people working tirelessly to offer ethical alternatives to mainstream products and services. You might not see these options on the high street and they may not be the first to appear in on-line searches. But they are on mygreenpod.com.

Use the search bar to find conscious lifestyle inspiration – and you could save some cash along the way!

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More than **80%** want their governments to do more to address the climate crisis



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IN ASSOCIATION WITH OMMM

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- INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
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- NATURE
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The awards will be in June 2026 as part of London Climate Action Week.

LONDON CLIMATE ACTION WEEK

Nominate your green heroes at peaawards.com

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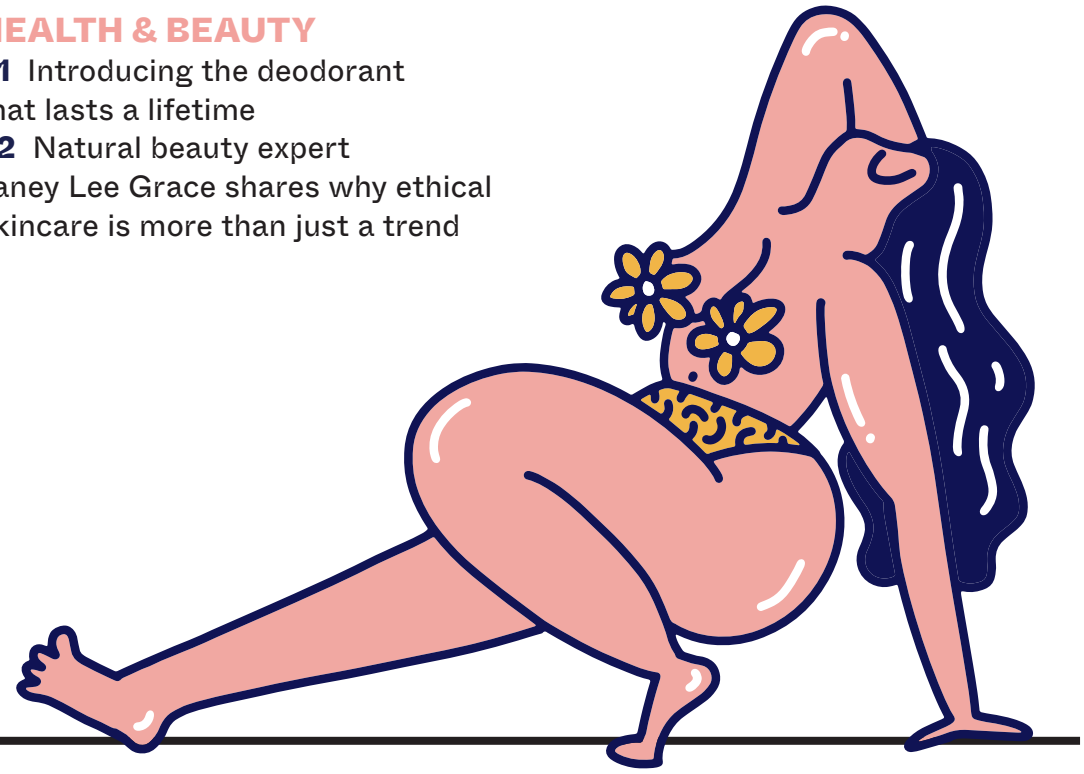
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PREPARING FOR COP30

Jonathon Porritt on how courage calls to courage – across the generations

Here we go again: the annual end-of-year COP fandango is upon us.

This particular Conference of the Parties (signatories to the original Framework Convention on Climate Change back in 1992) happens to be in Brazil, which is generally deemed to be a more sympathetic host country than its petrostate predecessors Azerbaijan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

That may be true (although rates of deforestation in the Amazon are on the up again), but COP30 will be just as resounding a failure (as in making not a ha'p'orth of difference) as the 29 other COPs that have gone before it.

There are many reasons for this – geopolitical, financial, technological and so on – but I want to look at one aspect that rarely gets mentioned. Almost every single delegate at COP30 will be focused on dodgy data – on things like the targets set by governments through their revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), on average temperature increases projected through to the end of the century (1.5°C and all that jazz) or on endless attention-grabbing voluntary initiatives about this, that or the other technology or nature-based 'solution'.

Distractions, diversions, manufactured rows, performative breast-beating, competitive outrage – maybe even some tears if we're lucky: we're in store for all that and a lot more from COP30.

Meanwhile the data that really matter (all about emissions from the burning of fossil fuels) will remain neglected on the sidelines, overlooked partly through ignorance but mostly by design.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

It's more or less 40 years since I helped to launch Friends of the Earth's first campaign for climate change – or global warming, as we called it then. Since that time, I have been involved in literally countless campaigns focusing on climate policy, awareness-raising, electioneering, mobilising, naming and shaming – you name it, I've tried it!

If I were writing my own appraisal, the headline would be: 'highly commendable effort, but with little discernible effect'. That's not to say there isn't a lot more going on now than there was then.



PHOTOGRAPHY ISTOCK

Today we see much higher levels of awareness all around the world and, understandably, we latch on to any good news like the drowning hope-mongers we are. We celebrate soaring global investment in solar and other renewables, reassured by opinion polls that tell us that more than 80% of people around the world want to see their government doing more to address the climate crisis.

Unfortunately, however, every single hard-edged data point that matters, from 2024, tells us something very different is still going on.

Emissions of greenhouse gases from coal, oil and gas: up. New investments in coal, oil and gas: up. Concentrations of CO_2 and methane in the atmosphere: up. Subsidies supporting the fossil fuel industry: up. Average temperature increases around the world: up.

The planet is now the hottest it has been in 120,000 years. CO_2 concentrations are at their highest for 3 million years.

All of this makes for a long-winded way of explaining why I was an enthusiastic supporter of Extinction Rebellion back in 2018, and then of Just Stop Oil in 2022.

LOVE, ANGER & BETRAYAL

When all else has failed (and shows every indication of continuing to fail, with a deeply disturbing political backlash now in full swing in many countries), it's surely time to have a crack at something disruptively, uncompromisingly different. Even if the kind of civil disobedience and direct action campaigning that defined Just Stop Oil's three short years may yet prove to have had no more impact in breaking the logjam than anything else.

What tipped me over into doing more about this was the utterly hateful way in which the right-wing media here in the UK attacked many of Just Stop Oil's younger campaigners, developing a whole new lexicon of personal insults, demonising caricatures and character assassinations. So I met up with some of them, started doing some interviews and was hugely impressed by their maturity, realism and courage – let alone by their depth of knowledge not just about the climate crisis but about the deep history of Non-Violent Direct Action and civil disobedience.

My new book, *Love, Anger & Betrayal*, is the result of all that, as a genuinely co-authored way of getting to grips with the climate crisis. The anger is mostly mine; the love comes across through their extraordinary empathy for the millions of people already impacted by the climate crisis – and for the hundreds of millions who will be even more dramatically impacted in the future. It's precisely that compassion which lies at the very heart of their civil disobedience.

As to the 'betrayal', I guess that's why I find myself getting angrier by the year! Who now remembers the 1987 Brundtland Report, 'Our Common Future', and its emphasis on sustainable development? This was defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' – underpinned by an inspiring commitment to justice both within any one generation and between generations.

'[...]more than 80% of people around the world want to see their government doing more to address the climate crisis. Unfortunately, however, every single hard-edged data point that matters, from 2024, tells us something very different is still going on.'

This explicit advocacy of justice between generations is so much more proactive than the default assumption that the interests of future generations are best served simply by improving the material standard of living of the present generation. Which of course means more of the same mindless economic growth, year on year, indefinitely into the future – which is still the principal cause of the climate and nature crises we face today!

THE POWER OF ONE INDUSTRY

Unbelievably, today's world leaders are now doubling down on that kind of intergenerational betrayal, all but guaranteeing both extreme climate instability and the progressive breakdown of the natural systems on which we depend. And it's the fossil fuel industry that is primarily responsible for this, together with its political lackeys.

The easiest way to understand the astonishing reach of the fossil fuel 'incumbency' is to see it as a global imperial power, operating in every corner of the Earth, regardless of the political status of countries – whether democracies, autocracies or failing states, they're subject only to partial and ineffective regulation by those countries once they've been effectively 'captured'.

This is achieved by the limitless amounts of money and other inducements the industry has deployed over decades to persuade politicians where their best interests lie. Equally limitless amounts of money are available for marketing and advertising campaigns of every description, for sponsorship arrangements and high-profile charitable activities. Just Stop Oil vigorously took on that incumbency, directly or indirectly, throughout its three years.

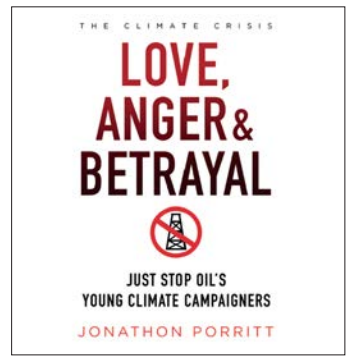
A RADICAL FORM OF KINSHIP

Working with Just Stop Oil's young campaigners has been extraordinarily energising for me personally. I've been deeply moved by their courage and their sense of moral obligation. Writing about *Love, Anger & Betrayal*, a friend of mine captured something I only now appreciate in retrospect: 'It's significant that several young campaigners featured in the book have already resolved never to become parents, while their bond with future generations remains undeniable. In choosing to act rather than to remain silent, they embody a radical form of kinship: one forged not through biology, but through duty, imagination and love.'

It's that 'radical form of kinship' that has inspired my growing involvement in the work of direct action climate campaigners, and in the nationwide uprising to bring an immediate end to the genocide in Gaza. I was arrested on 09 August and 06 September in Parliament Square for holding up a sign in support of the campaign to lift the ban on Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation and have been charged under s.13 of the Terrorism Act.

When I was sitting there in the Square I was thinking a lot about courage – the courage of the Suffragettes ('Courage calls to courage everywhere'), and the courage of Palestine Action campaigners targeting the premises of arms companies supplying the Israeli Defence Forces in Gaza or spraying paint on military planes at Brize Norton. Inflicting a lot of serious damage against property – just as the Suffragettes did – but unambiguously renouncing the use of violence against people, which I think is what most of us believe defines the essence of terrorism.

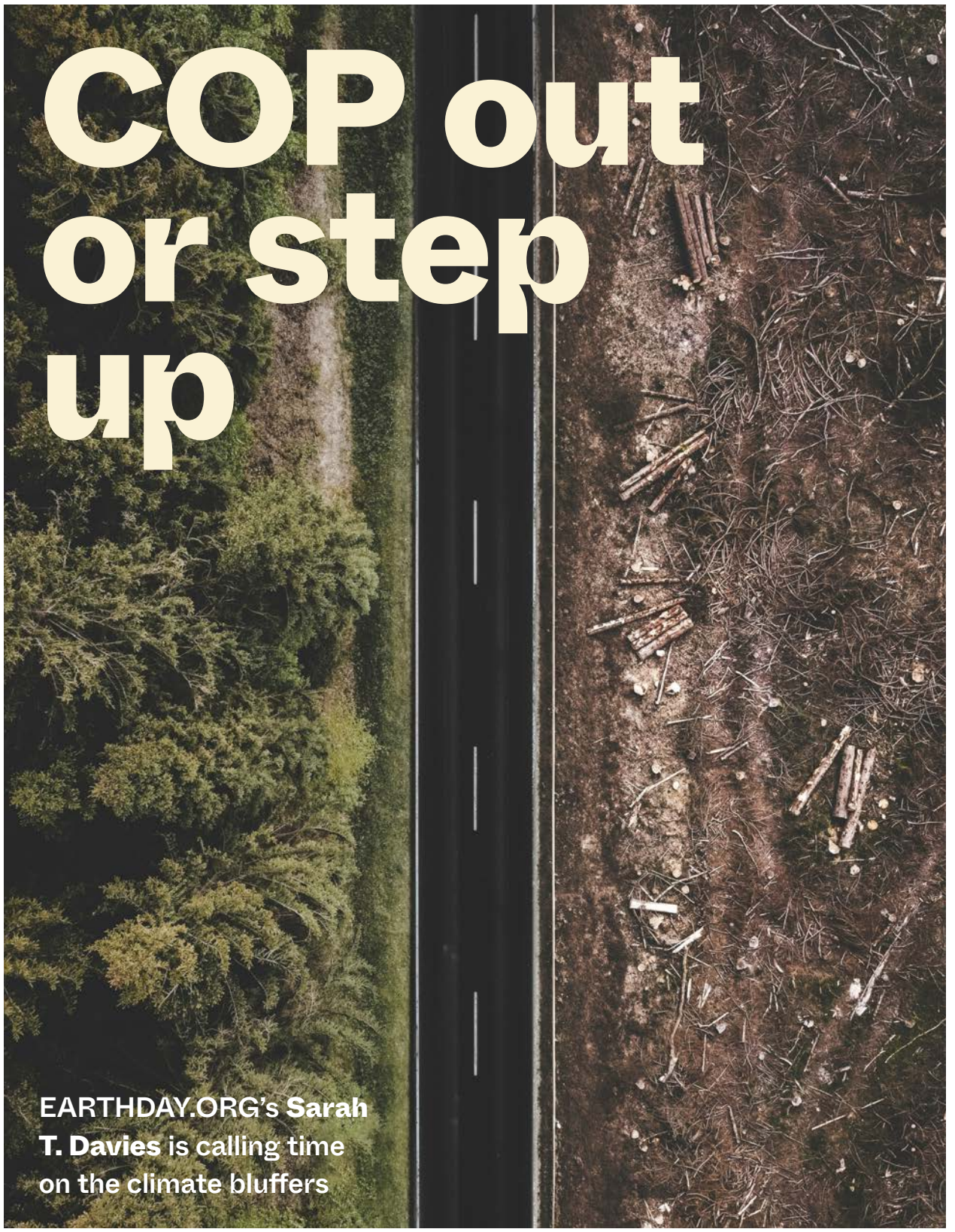
I couldn't possibly have had better mentors than my 26 co-authors over the last 18 months, unearthing my own radical campaigning roots back in the '70s and '80s – in the Green Party and Friends of the Earth. I rather doubt I would have been there in Parliament Square without that inspiration.



Find out more

- Jonathon Porritt is an author, campaigner, founder-director of Forum for the Future and former chair of the UK Sustainable Development Commission (2000-2009). Order his new book, Love, Anger & Betrayal, at **loveangerbetrayal.co.uk**

COP out or step up



EARTHDAY.ORG's **Sarah T. Davies** is calling time on the climate bluffers

This November the world's eyes will be on Brazil as COP30, the 30th UN Climate Conference, unfolds in Belém – an Amazon gateway city that is surrounded by lush forests and teeming with life.

Yet even before the summit kicks off, the scars of controversy surrounding COP30 are already all too vivid. To be precise, a new four-lane highway has been specially built for the event, slicing through tens of thousands of acres of protected rainforest to accommodate over 50,000 attendees who will be flying in to descend on the city and save the planet.

This highway, Avenida Liberdade, embodies a bitter paradox: a vital virgin rainforest has been cleared to host a climate summit aimed at, among other things, saving that very forest. The state of Pará has denied that the highway construction is directly linked to the COP30 event, and says the project was planned years before Belém was selected as the host city.

The irony that this makes it OK is palpable – why build this road at all? – yet the destruction has largely gone unnoticed and unmourned. Such is our appetite for attending events, conferences, summits and meetings that are aimed at discussing how we can limit human-inflicted damage to the planet we all call home.

CLIMATE CREDIBILITY

This moment truly does feel make or break – not just for the planet's health, but for the credibility of the climate movement itself.

World leaders, science experts and CEOs will gather to negotiate emissions cuts, champion renewable energy, defend global forests and shout climate justice from the rooftop. But amidst this cast of powerful players stands another crucial group: the army of NGOs and charities who claim to represent the public in this fight. They too must be held accountable.

Month after month, event after event, the same faces circulate – and the same three-letter abbreviated organisations show up at every single Climate Week event in the calendar.

Not a month goes by without some new 'happening' that requires everyone to board a plane and set off to save the world.

But what is all this talking and showing up actually achieving? Where is their funding going? How do their countless appearances, including at COP30, translate into real impact?

Sometimes it is hard to see the wood for the trees and we need to remind ourselves of the real wins that break through; when civil society is laser-focused and result-driven, it can still drive change.

SUCCESS ON THE GROUND

In a landmark victory in 2021 Dutch environmental organisations, including Friends of the Earth Netherlands and Greenpeace, won a court ruling that held the oil giant Shell legally responsible for its contribution to climate damage. For the first time, a fossil fuel company was ordered to reduce its carbon emissions drastically – in this case by 45% by 2030 – in alignment with the global goal to limit warming to 1.5°C.

In November 2024, the Court of Appeal of The Hague overturned this landmark decision, rejecting the specific 45% reduction order. While the Court reaffirmed that Shell has a duty of care to reduce emissions to mitigate climate change, it decided that Shell should decide how to meet this responsibility without a mandated and binding percentage cut.

Friends of the Earth and other plaintiffs have since appealed to the Dutch Supreme Court, with a final ruling expected in 2026.

While not a clear-cut win or the perfect victory many had wished for, this case set a powerful legal precedent that fossil fuel companies can be held accountable in court for their contributions to climate change.

Another success, again in 2021, saw the cancellation of the Keystone XL oil pipeline project by Canadian company TC Energy. Relentless opposition, led by Indigenous communities and allied environmental NGOs, saw the project scrapped.

This massive fossil fuel infrastructure, projected to transport tar sands oil from Alberta to the US Gulf Coast, posed grave risks for climate emissions, land destruction and Indigenous rights.

Community leaders at the forefront of resistance organised grassroots campaigns, legal challenges and public awareness efforts, and NGOs helped to amplify their stories. This united effort highlighted the intersection of Indigenous sovereignty and social justice with wider environmental causes. The eventual cancellation of the pipeline marked a rare but powerful win against entrenched fossil fuel interests.

Since returning to office in January 2025, President Donald Trump has taken steps to reopen the pipeline project, promising the regulatory approvals required for it to go ahead. But the original developer has stated it has moved on from the project and is not interested in restarting it. Much of the previously built pipeline has been dismantled, permits have expired and significant legal and financial hurdles remain for anyone interested in restarting construction.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

EARTHDAY.ORG (EDO)'s own Great Global Cleanup Campaign invites everyone to volunteer to clean up their own community, and its long-running Canopy Tree Project is a pragmatic, community-led solution to a real problem: planting trees to address deforestation. Since 2010, the project has seen hundreds of millions of trees planted in Bangladesh, India, Madagascar, Mexico, South Africa and Uganda, targeting the regions most impacted by climate change and deforestation.

In the Sundarbans of India, EDO's efforts focus on planting trees to enrich and protect the mangroves. Local people on the ground, funded by donations sent to EDO, plant *Avicennia alba* (black mangrove), which thrives at a lower substrate level and can withstand up to 5.5 hours of saline water submergence per day.

The heartwood of the black mangrove is used as a herbal medicine and its seeds are eaten as a vegetable. This incredible tree has lateral root systems that grow up and out of the muddy saline water; this allows them to take in oxygen for the submerged root systems, forming a natural flood barrier that substantially lowers tidal currents and stabilises soil erosion.

Like all trees, black mangroves absorb carbon dioxide, the key greenhouse gas, from the atmosphere and store it, making these mangrove forests important carbon sinks. So these incredible trees help to fight climate change while minimising flooding, providing important habitats for endangered species, providing herbal medicines and helping to feed communities.

These are three real-world examples that illustrate how NGOs have gained ground or made pragmatic steps to right wrongs. But more needs to be done. To that end, perhaps it's time for environmental groups to ask themselves where their efforts will have maximum impact.

AVOIDING THE CIRCUS

Flying delegations thousands of miles in oil-guzzling, greenhouse gas-emitting planes – often to stay in fancy resorts that use up natural resources – to spend a good part of their time speaking into their own echo chamber, might not be the best use of time and funding.

Marching and demanding action might serve us better, as Break Free From Plastics discovered when it activated the people of Ottawa to make their feelings known and demand a strong Global Plastics Treaty. Negotiations may have collapsed, but the fight to secure a treaty continues.





FROM THE TOP
Planting mangroves with EARTHDAY.ORG India's Sundarbans Canopy Tree Project; an EARTHDAY.ORG Cleanup in Srinagar, India; community coming together for EARTHDAY.ORG India's Sundarbans Canopy Tree Project; marching in Ottawa for the Break Free From Plastics campaign





It's increasingly worrying when instead, we see major NGOs simply attending every conceivable event, speaking on panels and sitting with the very companies driving climate change to begin with.

They appear to be there not so much to find common ground and bring their influence to bear in changing corporate behaviour, but to be part of the 'climate change circus'. It's as if 'being there' is an end in itself. It isn't.

ACTION, NOT ATTENDANCE

We need our leaders in the charitable and NGO space to drive results, not become an industry in their own right. If they must go to COP30, go with a clear mission, be focused on driving impact and know that actions always speak louder than words.

Leaders in the environmental movement also need to be more open to listening to new voices and embracing the new breed of emerging leaders, perhaps even stepping aside to let them take the movement forward.

There's a tendency for the old guard to cling to the past and 'their' way of doing things, as if anything not road-tested in the 1960s is unworthy. We haven't got time for this sort of posturing – the planet needs actual wins. Now.

The future demands action, not attendance. It's time for the climate movement to stop talking and start delivering.

Find out more

- Discover events, toolkits and ways to effect positive change at **earthday.org**



Help us support science

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We Don't Have Time.

Download on the App Store
4.6 out of 5

GET IT ON Google Play
4.4 out of 5





TOP TO BOTTOM Reachel Singh, Leonel Cerruto (centre) and Antonique Smith will perform at the concert



Sacred sounds in the Amazon

The World's First Concert for Nature will mark a new chapter in the relationship between art, science & spirit

Ahead of COP30 in Belém, Brazil a new kind of concert will take place in the heart of the Amazon rainforest – not a performance for people, but an offering to the living Earth.

Love Your Mother, the World's First Concert for Nature, with Amazon for Life, will unite Indigenous wisdom, scientific research and sonic artistry in an exploration of what happens when we express gratitude and good intention to nature itself. It will be presented by OMMM, in partnership with Amazon for Life, in a multi-dimensional experience at COP30 in Belém, Brazil.

MUSIC MEETS SCIENCE

The concert will take place in the sacred environment of the Amazon, and will honour the forest as a living temple. It will bring together a unique collaboration of Indigenous elders, who have long held the songs and ceremonies of Earth stewardship, plus world-class musicians and researchers in the field of consciousness.

At the heart of the concert is a pioneering field study by the Museum of Consciousness (MOC), led by researcher Carl Hayden Smith and sonic innovator Caz Coronel. Together with OMMM, they will record and analyse how nature – including plants, water and the wider forest environment – respond to musical frequencies and coherent intention.

Sensors will capture any shifts in vibrational and energetic patterns that take place during the performances, to reveal the ways in which sound, gratitude and consciousness interact with the living field of nature.

OMMM's vision is to create a living experiment to explore the extent to which harmony between humans and nature is quantifiably measurable. The results will form part of a growing body of research exploring how human emotion and awareness can positively influence ecological coherence.

ARTISTS & ELDERS

The concert will unite a constellation of artists whose work transcends performance and enters into the realm of devotion. Among them Antonique Smith, Grammy-nominated vocalist, climate 'artivist' and founder of Climate Revival, will bring the power of soul and activism, while Reachel Singh, sonic alchemist and healer, will offer music that explores how resonance and intention restore inner and planetary balance. Caz Coronel and Carl Hayden Smith will weave subtle frequencies, breath and spacious tonality into a meditative field of presence.

Each performance will merge with the chants and songs of Indigenous elders, blending ancient ceremonial tones with modern soundscapes to form a single field of resonance. In this space music will become a dialogue – between human and non-human, past and future, heart and Earth.

LISTENING BACK

This will not be an experience for passive spectators; unlike a traditional concert, it has been designed to be reciprocal, positioning the Amazon as both audience and co-creator.

'As the musicians play, gratitude becomes data, emotion becomes energy and science becomes story', says OMMM co-founder Michelle Narciso. 'The forest, through vibration and frequency, responds – reminding us that life is a continuous conversation between consciousness and creation. By merging ancient ceremony with scientific observation, the aim of the concert is to illustrate a profound truth: nature listens, remembers and responds to love.'

A GLOBAL BROADCAST

Through global broadcast partners We Don't Have Time and Hubcast, the concert will premiere to audiences in more than 100 countries. Viewers will be invited not just to witness but to participate in the event; to pause, give thanks and send their own frequencies of gratitude to the Earth.

It's hoped that this will create a shared moment of planetary coherence, marking a new chapter in the relationship between art, science and spirit.

CONNECTION & COMMUNION

The concert underscores OMMM's broader mission to shift the global narrative from extraction to connection and from consumption to communion. The project offers a glimpse of a future in which creativity itself becomes an act of reciprocity and regeneration.

The concert will use sound as a vehicle to remind us we are part of the same symphony. The Amazon, the musicians, the scientists and the audience will all be notes in one living composition.

The goal is to demonstrate that when gratitude becomes our language and harmony our practice, the planet will begin to sing back.

Find out more

- Discover how OMMM and its OMMMbassadors are supporting a shift in consciousness at **ommmpresents.com**

ACCELERATING THE TRANSITION

How reaching net zero before 2050 would strengthen domestic economies & transform global communities

The UK is on a path to net zero, but many fear the 2050 deadline is simply too far off and that, after 30 years of target-setting, we should already be well on the road to environmental recovery.

'Three main things are blocking the transition', says Heather Buchanan, CEO and co-founder of Bankers for Net Zero (B4NZ): 'policy uncertainty, fragmentation and misaligned incentives that reward short-term profit over long-term resilience. Finance, policy and real economy actors are working in silos when systemic challenges demand systemic solutions.'

The banking sector, which controls trillions in assets and is the bridge between capital and the real economy, has a key role to play in the transition to net zero; yet Heather rightly insists that no single actor or sector can achieve the transition alone. Banks can't move without policy clarity; policymakers can't legislate effectively without industry input and businesses can't decarbonise without access to finance.

'Collaboration is the only way to align incentives and unlock systemic change', Heather asserts.

'Policy, finance and community development have historically been siloed; the result has been fragmented initiatives that don't scale. B4NZ's unique role is convening these worlds and demonstrating that when you integrate them, you can unlock capital flows that benefit both people and the planet.'

THE POWER OF FINANCE

Heather has always been deeply motivated by the ways in which finance can be used to serve society. Before founding B4NZ, she spent over a decade working at the interface of financial services and policymaking. 'My focus was on designing systems that could serve the economy better, whether through banking regulation, parliamentary engagement or policy reform', she tells us. 'Those experiences gave me a front-row view of how financial policy can either accelerate or obstruct systemic change.'

The more Heather worked with parliamentarians, banks and regulators, the clearer it became that the financial system has both the power and the responsibility to deliver solutions at scale.

'I wouldn't say I grew up as a 'climate activist'', she admits, 'but over time, it became clear to me that climate change is the greatest systemic risk to both our economy and our way of life. Once you



'The transition to net zero is not a burden, it's the greatest economic opportunity of our time. If we get it right, we can create a fairer, more resilient economy that benefits everyone. That's the vision driving B4NZ.'

HEATHER BUCHANAN

CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, B4NZ

see that, the conclusion is unavoidable: unless finance is harnessed to drive the transition, we won't have a resilient or prosperous future.'

FROM COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

B4NZ's purpose is to accelerate the transition to net zero. It was set up ahead of conversations in 2019 about how to bridge the gap between high-level commitments and action on the ground.

'The spark for B4NZ came ahead of COP26', Heather remembers. 'We could see trillions in capital had been committed to 'net zero' through international initiatives, but there was no clear mechanism for translating those commitments into practical delivery within the UK's unique policy and market context.'

Heather wanted to create a platform that was collaborative, pragmatic and 'laser-focused on turning commitments into action'. From the outset, B4NZ's mission has been to align banks, policymakers and businesses so that finance can flow into the real economy, supporting SMEs, scaling retrofit, transforming agriculture and driving nature-positive investment.

'It's not a lack of capital that's stopping finance from flowing to the real economy, it's a lack of investable projects, combined with risk perception', Heather explains. 'Too often, the conversation is framed as cost rather than opportunity. That narrative has to change. Banks need data they can trust, policy frameworks they can rely on and scalable models they can replicate.'

INVESTING IN THE TRANSITION

The appetite is there; recent B4NZ membership surveys reveal that banks and corporates are working with B4NZ in order to collaborate pre-competitively, shape policy and demonstrate leadership. 'For many, it's also about commercial opportunity', Heather tells us'; 'there are hundreds of billions of pounds to be made in the transition, from retrofitting the UK's building stock to financing clean energy SMEs in emerging markets. So while there is genuine climate concern, there's also a hard-nosed business case. Banks that fail to adapt will lose competitiveness. Those that lead will unlock entirely new markets.'

B4NZ's work with UK banks, ranging from high-street names like NatWest to challengers like Allica and Tide, has revealed a demonstrable will to act. The question is whether the right policy frameworks are in place; 'That's where B4NZ adds value', Heather shares. 'We're trying to design solutions that make green finance frictionless and scalable.'

DECARBONISING OUR SMES

For Heather, the role of banks isn't just to fund 'green' projects', but to enable entire sectors to transition. Domestically, B4NZ's focus is on SMEs; they represent 99% of UK businesses and over half of employment, yet have historically been overlooked in climate policy and remain under-served when it comes to support reaching net zero.

'The role of SMEs is critical', Heather shares, 'not just because of their carbon footprint, but because they are innovators, supply chain linchpins and community anchors. But for SMEs net zero isn't just about compliance; it's about opportunity. SMEs that decarbonise can reduce costs through efficiency, access new markets and attract investment. They also build resilience against shocks, whether that's energy price spikes or supply chain disruptions.'

'So while there is genuine climate concern, there's also a hard-nosed business case. Banks that fail to adapt will lose competitiveness. Those that lead will unlock entirely new markets.'

Through B4NZ's SME Sustainability Data Taskforce and in its role as an associate member of the Transition Finance Council, it's reducing reporting friction, improving access to green finance and building the architecture that will allow SMEs to decarbonise at scale.

'We're also working on retrofit finance and agriculture transition', Heather shares, 'both of which are critical to the UK's climate goals but stuck in delivery gaps.'

The impact of this work will be huge: it will generate cost savings for businesses, new markets for banks and accelerated emissions reductions across the real economy.

EMERGING ECONOMIES

While decarbonising domestic SMEs is seen as critical to the UK's emissions reduction targets, Heather believes that the transition will be won or lost in emerging economies. 'That's where future emissions growth lies', Heather puts its simply. 'The choices being made now in countries like Tanzania, Bolivia or Ukraine – whether they build coal plants or leapfrog to clean infrastructure – will lock in carbon trajectories for decades.'

Emerging economies also hold much of the world's biodiversity and natural capital. Without finance flowing into these regions, the climate and nature crises suddenly look unavoidable, yet a critical funding gap limits their ability to mitigate climate risks and achieve sustainable development.

'Despite global commitments, mobilisation of capital remains slow, held back by insufficient collaboration, ineffective financing structures and lack of supportive policies', Heather tells us. 'Perceived risk, lack of local capacity and the mismatch between global capital requirements and local realities are additional barriers; many projects are simply too small, fragmented or complex for large institutional investors.'

As you'd expect, B4NZ is addressing these systemic barriers through an integrated model that combines climate diplomacy, policy advocacy, private capital mobilisation and deep local partnerships. The approach, anchored in UK parliamentary engagement and B4NZ's role as a UN Race to Zero Accelerator, leverages the UK's financial services ecosystem and diplomatic reach to deliver scalable, high-integrity finance across priority regions.

BLUEPRINTS FOR ACTION

B4NZ has already developed plans to move from dialogue to delivery through a set of initiatives that demonstrate scalable financial mechanisms.

In the UAE, a blueprint is being created to accelerate net-zero investment by integrating private, public and philanthropic capital with supportive policies.

Domestic energy capacity is being expanded in Tanzania through strengthened local financial and technical capabilities, which enable the structuring of bankable projects linked to the UAE/UK fund.

In Ukraine, preparatory work is underway to mobilise institutional capital via an Article 6.2-aligned framework, bringing political, financial and institutional engagement into one coherent approach. This could support the reconstruction of a renewable, decentralised and resilient energy system, building an aggregated project pipeline of up to £500 million. Similarly, Article 6.2 programme work is being developed in Bolivia to support rainforest preservation.

FINANCE AT COP30

B4NZ's international projects demonstrate how political agreements and policy frameworks can be embedded into practical, investable financing structures. Heather's hope is that, as world leaders convene for the next round of climate negations at COP30, the talks will lead to a breakthrough on climate finance. 'We need commitments that go beyond pledges to actual mechanisms for mobilising trillions, not billions', she tells us. 'My hope is that COP30 puts emerging markets at the centre of the agenda, with clear roadmaps for private investment alongside public funds.'

Irrespective of the outcome, B4NZ will continue to test and scale innovative decarbonisation solutions that others can adopt globally.

Find out more

- For information about B4NZ's projects and ways to get involved, visit **bankersfornetzero.co.uk**

THE PEARL OF AFRICA

Uganda's economy is benefiting from a tourism sector rooted in conservation and peace

In *My African Journey,* Sir Winston Churchill described Uganda as the 'pearl of Africa' – though to many this pearl remains a hidden treasure.

A brutal period of civil war and repression – compounded by clashes with neighbouring nations the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan – left a legacy of civil and environmental challenges that pushed this once-booming tourist destination off the circuit.

1986 ushered in a new era and the beginnings of economic stability under the leadership of Yoweri Museveni. Uganda's national parks, which suffered from neglect during the period of conflict, have now recovered and the tourism sector, which was once such an important part of the nation's economy, is preparing to thrive again. It's being built on foundations of peace, conservation, collaboration and a deep pride in this very special nation's unique cultural and environmental identity.



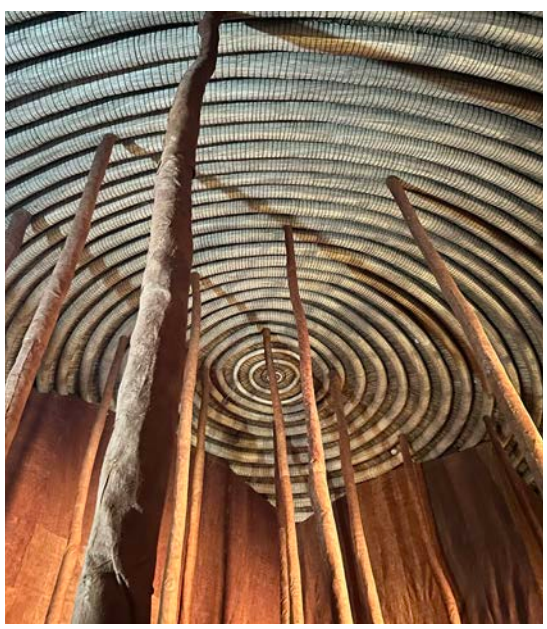


UGANDA'S KINGDOMS

Uganda's cultural heritage and commitment to peaceful collaboration is nowhere more apparent than at The Royal Tombs at Kasubi, a UNESCO World Heritage site in the capital city, Kampala. It was described by UNESCO as 'one of the most remarkable buildings using purely vegetal materials in the entire region of sub-Saharan Africa'. The World Heritage Committee noted that the site 'combines the historical and spiritual values of a nation.'

The Royal Tombs are the resting place of four kings who ruled Buganda, the largest of the five traditional kingdoms that constitute modern-day East Africa. The building is a religious centre for the royal family and a place where the Kabaka (king) and his representatives carry out important rituals related to Buganda culture.

Uganda's five kingdoms date back to medieval times; they were abolished under Milton Obote but restored as constitutional monarchies by Yoweri Museveni in 1993. Only four of the five









kingdoms are ever active, as the kingdom in which the ruling president was born remains dormant. This pre-empts clashes for power with the government – a nod to the tensions that unfolded in the past – and is a clear message that unity, shared purpose and celebration of heritage will be part of the fabric of this nation.

The circular building, constructed using poles, spear grass, reeds and wattle, is a work of art and testament to the creative genius and exceptional craftsmanship of the Baganda.

The thick thatched roof is held together by 52 rings of palm fronds, representing the 52 traditional clans of the Baganda people. Just as the 52 rings are fundamental to the roof's structure, the 52 clans have historically been essential to Buganda's social structure. Each clan can trace its lineage back to a common ancestor, and is represented by a totem that is central to the clan's identity.

Marriage is forbidden within a clan and clan members are forbidden from eating their plant or animal totem. The clan and its totem are intimately linked; the totem's characteristics are reflected in each clan member's mottos and role in society; as an example, the oldest clan is the Fumbe (African civet), and its male members were medicine men to the king.

DIVERSE NATIONAL PARKS

Uganda's close links to the natural world are encouraged by the nation's diverse ecosystems, which range from swamps and rainforests to volcanic mountains. The nation boasts 10 national parks; the Rwenzori Mountains, dubbed the 'Mountains of the Moon', stretch 120km along the border with DRC in western Uganda. This UNESCO World Heritage Site has also been designated a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, located in south-west Uganda on the edge of the Rift Valley, is one of Africa's most ancient and biologically diverse rainforests. The 25,000-year-old jungle is home to an incredible 400 plant species and famously protects roughly 459 mountain gorillas – almost half of the world's remaining population. It's one of the best places to experience gorilla trekking.

Across the Equator, Kibale National Park is renowned for its extraordinary primate diversity; visitors get a rare chance to encounter 13 different primate species during an immersive trek. Red colobus, black-and-white colobus, L'Hoest's monkey and grey-cheeked mangabey are frequently spotted in the forest canopy, but the Kibale chimpanzees are the undisputed stars of the show.

Murchison Falls is Uganda's largest and most iconic safari destination, while Kidepo Valley is the nation's most remote and least explored national park. It sits in wilderness in the











CLOCKWISE Elephants from a boat safari on the Kazinga Channel; overlooking Queen Elizabeth National Park; jackfruit is popular with smallholder farmers; a vervet monkey; straddling the hemispheres at the equator; Yogi Biriggwa, President of Uganda Tourism Association (UTA); a lodge at the Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary; lesser flamingos at the Katwe-Kabatoro region of Queen Elizabeth National Park; outside the Royal Tombs; the roof is made from 52 rings of palm fronds; marabou stork at Nature's Green Beach Resort

north-east corner, a ‘wild frontier’ region bordering South Sudan and just 5km west of Kenya.

A LAKSIDE OASIS

Lakes and rivers cover nearly 20% of the country, and we were stunned by the variety of birdlife on the edges of Lake Victoria, Uganda’s largest lake, when we stayed at Nature’s Green Beach Resort.

This resort comprises a collection of beautiful lakeside cottages dotted around a lush expanse of trees and flowers. Just 20 minutes south of the centre of Kampala, the resort is a true oasis and a hidden gem for intrepid travellers beginning or ending their adventure in Uganda. It’s a perfect honeymoon location but equally supportive of families, and our stay was made magical with a campfire dinner under the stars.

Maribou storks bravely wove their way between the edge of the fish-filled lake and the resort’s decking, and monitor lizards rustled in the low vegetation at the water’s edge. Pied flycatchers dipped in and out of the water, under the watchful eye of cormorants and white egrets, who perched patiently on old posts protruding from the water. Glossy ibis roamed the grounds, completely unfazed by our proximity and interest.

Nature’s Green Beach Resort is owned by Yogi Biriggwa; as the recently elected President of Uganda Tourism Association (UTA), Yogi knows a thing or two about what makes travellers tick.

TOURISM & CONSERVATION

Uganda has a target of $4 billion in tourism earnings by 2030; it’s not easy – hotels pay up to 26 different taxes and licenses – but Yogi’s vision is one of collaboration. She is partnering with government, development partners and communities in a bid to position Uganda as Africa’s leading sustainable, inclusive and globally competitive tourism destination.

Tourism currently contributes 6.6% to Uganda’s GDP and over $1.2 billion in foreign exchange earnings, while supporting more than 800,000 jobs.

The goal now is to elevate Uganda’s voice in the global tourism conversation, showcase the country’s unique treasures to travellers who care about making a difference and to keep Uganda shining brightly on the world stage.

State Minister for Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, Hon. Martin Mugarra, has acknowledged tourism has a key role to play in economic growth, job creation and cultural preservation, and boosting Uganda’s global visibility.

Yogi recently led a high-level dialogue with H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, which reaffirmed the central role of tourism in Uganda’s socio-economic transformation. The meeting marked a major step towards deeper public-private sector collaboration to unlock the sector’s full potential.

The President described tourism as ‘a powerful export and foreign exchange earner that must be treated as such’. ‘Tourism is an export and it should not be taxed’, he said. ‘It brings in foreign exchange, and our government policy is clear; exports should not be taxed. I will harmonise with the relevant arms of government to issue full guidance on taxation and support for the tourism industry.’

CLOCKWISE
Uganda has set a target to secure and expand its rhino population; accommodation at Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary, the site of a successful rhino breeding programme; individuals supported rhino conservation through the Rhino Naming Ceremony in September





PROTECTING RHINO

One of the key components of the tourism strategy is conservation, and in September Uganda held its first Rhino Naming Ceremony, at Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary in Nakasongola District.

Rhinos were once widespread in Uganda, but poaching and habitat loss drove them to extinction in the wild.



The goal of the Naming Ceremony is to secure and expand Uganda’s rhino population by giving individuals, corporates and philanthropists the unique opportunity to symbolically ‘adopt’ and name a rhino. Proceeds will directly fund habitat expansion, veterinary care, anti-poaching measures and community conservation programmes.

Under the National Rhino Conservation and Management Strategy for Uganda (2018-2028), the country aims to achieve an annual rhino population growth rate of at least 5%. Since 2006, the breeding programme at Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary has seen 40 southern white rhinos born from an initial founder population of six.

‘This is more than a naming ceremony’, said Juliana Kagwa, CEO of Uganda Tourism Board (UTB); ‘it is a platform to showcase Uganda’s commitment to sustainable tourism. Our natural heritage is our competitive advantage, and protecting it ensures that visitors continue to choose Uganda for authentic wildlife experiences.’

Find out more

- Information about Uganda’s parks and reserves is at **ugandawildlife.org**
- Discover how the tourism sector is supporting conservation at **utauganda.org**



Following Hemingway's adventures on our family trip to Uganda

'Something more than a safari'

In Uganda's largest and oldest conservation area, the mighty Nile River is squeezed through an impossibly narrow gorge; the result is the thundering Murchison Falls: a 43-metre vertical cascade – as majestic as it is sublime – that is considered the world's most powerful waterfall. The water spurts and plumes to such mesmerising effect that it almost proved fatal to one of America's most celebrated 20th-century writers.

In 1954, Ernest Hemingway and his wife Mary were enjoying a sightseeing trip in Uganda when their pilot – perhaps under encouragement to get the Cessna 180 *just a little closer* – clipped a disused telephone wire and was forced to crash-land in a small clearing close to the Falls.

Of course, no one could survive a night on the Nile: reporters all over the world scrambled to file premature obituaries headlined by Hemingway's untimely end in the crocodile-infested river. They couldn't have known that, back at the Falls, Ernest and Mary had suffered only minor scrapes; their greatest headache was the prospect of rationing their supply of whisky and beer.

The rescue plane caused the couple more serious injuries when it burst into flames on take-off, though not before they had taken a jaunt up the Nile on the African Queen – star of the eponymous 1951 film starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn – which had spotted and rescued the couple before the whisky had run dry.

When we visited Hemingway Lodge, the location of the telephone wire that brought the bush plane down, we understood in an instant why the site had been such an irresistible draw.





CLOCKWISE
Enjoying a lakeside campfire at Lake Albert Safari Lodge; a Nile crocodile basking on the bank of the river; the 'spotter seat' got the kids close to nature in Murchison Falls Nation Park

TRAVELLING UP THE NILE

Hemingway Lodge had been recommended by Brigitte Paye and her musician partner King Whizzy, founders of Afric Adict Safaris, who know Uganda intimately and operate bespoke tours that get you up close and personal with the incredible culture and wildlife Uganda has to offer. That was certainly the case for us.

We travelled from Kampala by car but the final, magical leg of the journey to Hemingway Lodge was a one-hour boat ride up the Nile. We reached the river's banks at 18.00, which was a couple of hours later than we (and probably our captain, Milton) would have liked. The sun was dipping and wildlife gaining new confidence as boat safaris left the water and tourists were ushered back to their vehicles.

Within 10 minutes of casting off a giraffe came into view at close range at the edge of the river, knees buckled and head dipped as it quenched its thirst in peace. Nile crocodiles climbed to laze on the riverbank and hippos grunted comically before dipping under the water, leaving only their eyes in view on the surface.

'The hippos are the animals we fear the most', Milton explained after Roger, his colleague from the lodge, had handed us beers from the boat's cool box. 'They're the only animals that kill man for fun – they're vegetarian!'

Within an hour, our boat was pulling up to a jetty at the base of a track leading mysteriously through the thick riverine forest; our luxury tented lodge was only a 10-minute drive away, but remained completely invisible until we pulled up outside. We were warmly greeted by a campfire, candlelit

‘I never knew of a morning in Africa when I woke up that I was not happy’
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

outdoor dinner table and delicious three-course meal, warmly presented by Anita, the wonderful lodge manager.

A MURCHISON FALLS SAFARI

The Nile is the route in and out of Hemingway Lodge, so each day began with a low-light trip across mystical waters humming with life. Pied and malachite kingfishers, African fish eagles, egrets, herons and many, many other birds observed us quietly from branches and perches, silhouetted against the rising sun.

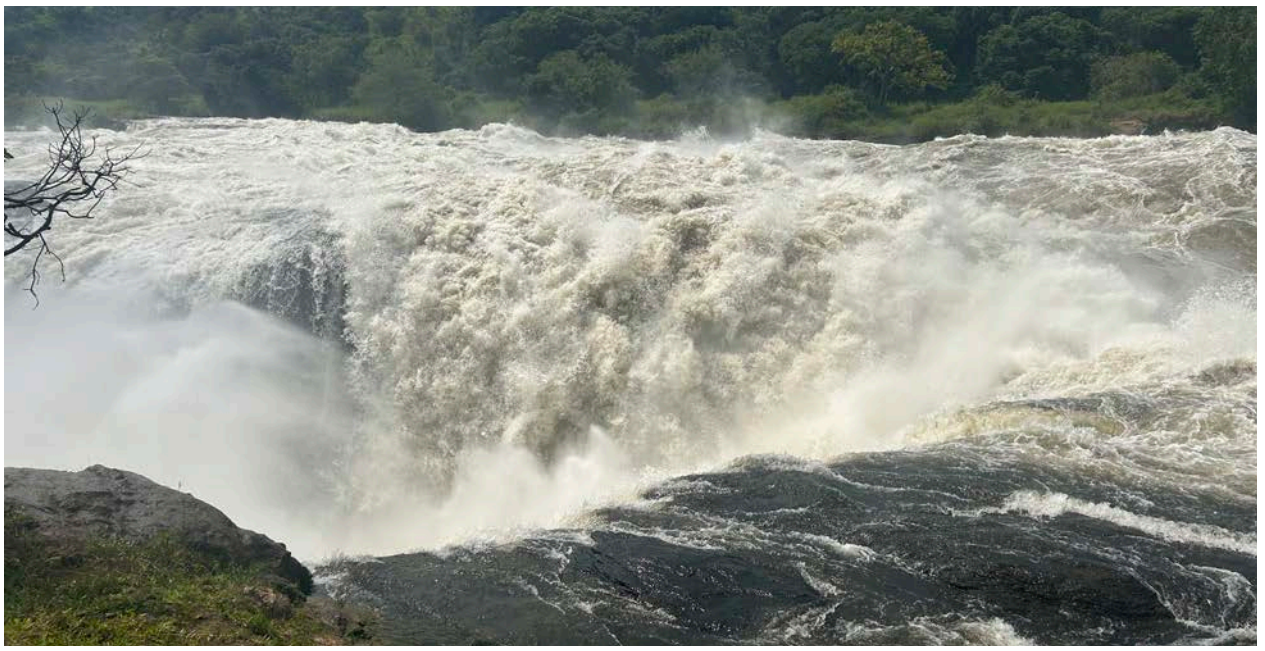
Thanks to Afric Adict Safaris, we spent a truly unforgettable day on safari in Murchison Falls National Park, under the expert eye of Silva, a ranger from Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). Our vehicle, complete with a ‘spotter seat’ that proved a hit with the kids, wound effortlessly through the park, each turn revealing a breathtaking surprise.



The land here shifts quickly, switching from vast, open and sweeping panoramas to buffalo-fringed swamps, borassus palms and clumps of acacia trees, complete with more giraffes than we could count and elephants – strolling carefree, and seemingly out of nowhere – across our track. The highlight for many was a pair of lions resting in the shade of the long grass.

A very special bush lunch was prepared by ‘Chef Samuel’ and served from his vehicle’s bonnet. Irish (mashed) potato, rice and a traditional bean stew were not only delicious but also, unfathomably, perfectly cooked and piping hot. Where many UK restaurants fail, Chef Samuel, in the middle of the bush, succeeded – with flair.

We reclined in our camp chairs, fresh watermelon in hand, and inhaled the unparalleled fragrance that rises from the ground when the sun has had time to warm the African savanna. We breathed it in, with buffalo, Ugandan kob and giraffes as far as the eye could see, and were reminded why every day in Africa was, for Ernest Hemingway, a happy one.







CLOCKWISE
The view from the top of Murchison Falls; Aston Sparks with the snares collected in a week by one of the six anti-poaching units in Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve; the cocktail bar at Lake Albert Safari Lodge; inside our family cottage at Lake Albert Safari Lodge

HIPPOS & POACHERS

The hippos were certainly more animated during our dusky returns up the Nile – and their chuckling reached new heights when darkness fell. Yet it was still hard to believe they were, as our captain Milton had suggested on our first day, the villains of the Nile.

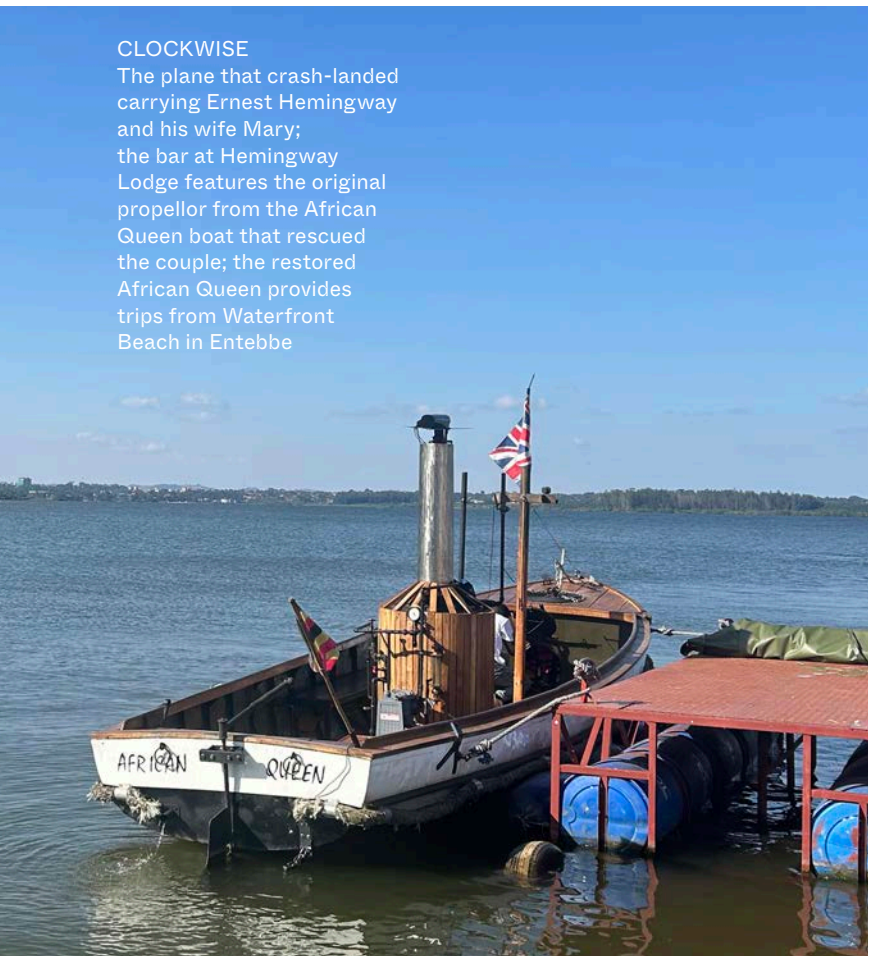
Three days later I was deep in conversation on the subject with Aston and Robin Sparks, family owners of Hemingway Lodge and Lake Albert Safari Lodge in the Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve.

‘You saw it’, Aston said; ‘as soon as the boats stop, that’s when the animals come out – and it’s when the poaching would start.’ In the recent past, poachers would lay nets across the width of the Nile and trawl it for hippos. No wonder they were sometimes aggressive. Since Robin and Aston began taking a more active role in the management of the lodges, alongside Robin’s father, Bruce, poaching has plummeted by 80%.

We took a trip out to visit one of Aston’s six anti-poaching units on Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve, the location of Lake Albert Safari Lodge, and he showed us some of the rusty, barbaric snares that had been located and collected by his team of rangers.

COMMUNITY WILDLIFE

Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve used to be a playground for lions and leopards, positioned tactically on a migratory route for large herds of buffalo. Yet when Bruce bought the Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve 18 years ago, most of its 8,700 km² were pretty barren. This was the devastating result of years of civil war, combined with resource competition due to the



CLOCKWISE
The plane that crash-landed carrying Ernest Hemingway and his wife Mary; the bar at Hemingway Lodge features the original propellor from the African Queen boat that rescued the couple; the restored African Queen provides trips from Waterfront Beach in Entebbe





undisturbed by the familiar sight of Aston's 4x4, in which it's not uncommon to find a G&T skilfully balanced in the central reserve.

Baboons sat on the wall outside our beautiful grass-thatched family cottage, camera-ready against the breathtaking and completely uninterrupted backdrop of Lake Albert. The lake is framed by the magnificent Blue Mountains, rising from the horizon, 30km across the lake, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Guests are encouraged to absorb the scenery with a sun-downer; the outdoor space boasts a pool, an inviting semi-circle of camping chairs, a blazing campfire and a retro mobile cocktail bar. I sense Aston's hand in this thoughtful luxury.

When the sun has set and the watermelon mojitos run dry, fishing-boats light up the lake. Candles in the main building create a warm intimacy over dinner, and the delicious fresh food and juices are exactly what's needed after a day out in the wild.

The park and community wildlife area buffer zone sprawl across the Albertine Rift valley, which proved a superb location for fossil hunting with the kids. Robin's passion and knowledge are contagious; she brought the geology and history to life, and our children returned from the trip with a new zeal for all things volcanic and tectonic.

'So that even now, if you went to Africa for a few weeks, and looked at the stars in the high veldt or the real bush and felt the true wilderness, if you knew, really knew, that you could never come again, then it would be something more than a safari.'

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

9,000 cattle herded by nomadic owners. They had been known to poison a single cow from their herd in order to kill off an entire pride of lions.

Bruce started out on Kabwoya Wildlife Reserve with two warthogs, 21 Ugandan kob and a few buffalo; today the reserve has 500 buffalo, 9,000 kob and a couple of hundred Defassa waterbuck. 50 Jackson's hartebeest have been introduced and zebra and giant forest frogs are coming soon.

Fired by passions for conservation, biodiversity and ecology, Robin and Aston are working with the local community to keep poaching away. Aston is keen to create a reserve that benefits the community as well as its wildlife, and show poachers there is another way to operate.

The couple has created a community wildlife area around Kabwoya, which serves as a buffer zone for the reserve. Communities live here and graze their sheep and goats on the land, and this is where the park entry fee goes. Aston's motto – 'Let's have a drink and get on' – is working.

LAKE ALBERT LUXURY

Aston's fearless action is balanced beautifully by Robin's more philosophical outlook; she grew up on a nature reserve in South Africa and understands how wildlife works. 'You just need to provide water, food, safety – and the rest will take care of itself', she told me. I shared a few of my favourite moments from Isabella Tree's journey with Knepp Estate, and suggested that patience was perhaps the final – yet crucial – ingredient. 'Yes, definitely patience', Robin laughed; 'it takes time.'

The couple's efforts aren't obvious on the surface of day-to-day operations, and that is less by accident than design. 'Guests don't necessarily ever know what's going on behind the scenes when they visit a safari lodge or come out to a place like this – and that's OK', Robin shared. 'But there's always a lot happening in the background.'

For many guests, Lake Albert Safari Lodge is simply a blissful spot for a romantic getaway, honeymoon or wildlife break. Animals roam freely,

OUR AFRICAN QUEEN ADVENTURE

A trip on the very same African Queen that had rescued Ernest and Mary was an offer we couldn't refuse. Bruce discovered the abandoned steamboat on the banks of the Falls and has lovingly restored her; today she is once again the 'Queen of the waters', providing trips out from Entebbe.

The boat and beach are just a short drive from another property belonging to Bruce and his family; Entebbe Palm Hotel is conveniently located a 10-minute drive from Uganda's international airport in Entebbe. Complete with pool and exceptional Thai menu, it's the perfect place to relax and either begin or close an African adventure – raising a glass and imagining Hemingway's smile of approval.

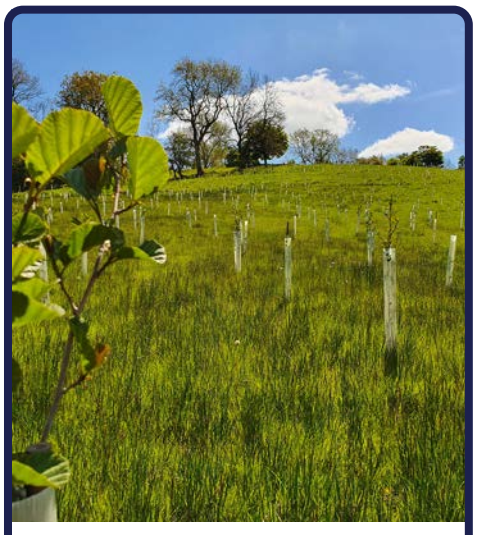
Find out more

- Information about Hemingway Lodge is at **murchisonrivercamps.com**
- Design a bespoke trip that gets you close to Uganda's wildlife at **africadict.com**

HERO PRODUCTS

Introducing our November Heroes!
We've picked these products because we believe they are all best in their class for people and the planet. They represent simple, sustainable switches that will help to keep you, your home and the planet healthy – without compromising on experience or performance!

View all our Heroes at mygreenpod.com/heroes



9TREES TREE GIFT

Mark any special occasion with this gift of a tree and a wooden decoration from 9Trees CIC.

mygreenpod.com/heroes/9trees-tree-gift

HOME & GARDEN



KEEP THIS CRACKER 6 REUSABLE CRACKERS

A reusable and plastic-free alternative to the standard disposable cracker.

mygreenpod.com/heroes/keep-this-cracker-six-reusable-crackers-red-jewel-design



NATURE NURTURE KIDS NATURE NURTURE KIT

A great gift – this original, eco-friendly kit was created to help children to help nature.

mygreenpod.com/heroes/nature-nurture-kids-the-nature-nurture-kit



STROUD BREWERY HOP DROP PALE ALE

A vibrantly hoppy organic pale ale, packed with punchy citrus and tropical hop aromas.

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FOOD & DRINK



DIRTEA MUSHROOM POWDER BOXSET

A set of four pure and potent mushroom powders – Chaga, Lion's Mane, Cordyceps and Reishi.

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AURA SEA SALT

An organic Celtic sea salt in five flavour blends – each pinch provides your daily vitamin D.

mygreenpod.com/heroes/aura-sea-salt

TOP 5 NOVEMBER SWITCHES

1

Switch to Re-Wrapped gift wrap this Christmas – gorgeous designs made using 100% recycled post-consumer waste, unbleached pulp and vegetable-based inks.

@Rewrappeduk

mygreenpod.com/heroes/re-wrapped-wrapping-paper

2

Finish your table using Skär Organics Organic Beeswax Dinner Candles, the UK's first certified-organic dinner candles.

#SkarOrganics

mygreenpod.com/heroes/skar-organics-organic-beeswax-dinner-candles

3

Vintage Roots Organic Everyday wines have something for everyone this Christmas – three whites and three reds in a case.

@VintageRootsLtd

mygreenpod.com/heroes/vintage-roots-organic-everyday

4

Looking for an eco stocking filler? The Silicone Straw Company's colourful and reusable straws are safe for your family and the planet.

#SiliconeStrawCompany

mygreenpod.com/heroes/the-silicone-straw-company-colourful-8-pack

5

Give the gift of great hair with Tabitha JK's super-luxe organic haircare products. We love the Organic Scented Hair Oil.

@TabithaJK

mygreenpod.com/heroes/tabitha-james-kraan-scented-organic-hair-oil



The lifelong deo

Introducing the plastic-free liquid deodorant designed to last a lifetime



Inspiration can strike at any time, and Adam Webb's lightbulb moment came when he was applying deodorant.

'I looked at myself in the mirror and asked: how many of these do I use in a year – in a lifetime? How many do we use in the UK, the USA – the world? It was then that I decided to create a deodorant that lasts a lifetime.'

In addition to feeling 'genuinely sick' of all the single-use plastic in his daily routine, Adam launched Lifelong Deo in a bid to address a deeper cultural problem. 'I was tired of seeing ugly personal care products', he tells us. 'I wanted to create a product people would feel inspired to keep for a lifetime – that they wouldn't want to throw away.'

Lifelong Deo is a plastic-free liquid roll-on deodorant, which is unique in a couple of ways. 'All other plastic-free deos are sticks', Adam explains. 'We decided to keep away from sticks as they are, well, sticky. They leave white marks on your clothes and a paste under your armpit.'

Adam confesses that creating a plastic-free liquid deodorant was 'easier said than done' because most liquid deodorants use plastic to protect the liquid. Instead, Lifelong Deo contains an all-natural powder that you simply mix with water at home to create the finished product.

AFFORDABLY SUSTAINABLE

The original Lifelong Deo was designed to be a luxury deodorant that looked beautiful, felt great and was made from the highest quality materials. It launched on Kickstarter and was a huge success, raising 354,000 euros and generating Lifelong Deo's first few thousand customers.

Still, Adam knew there was more work to be done. 'It was a luxurious product but quite expensive for the average person', he shares; 'to make the biggest impact I knew we needed to design a deodorant that was more affordable and accessible to everyone.'

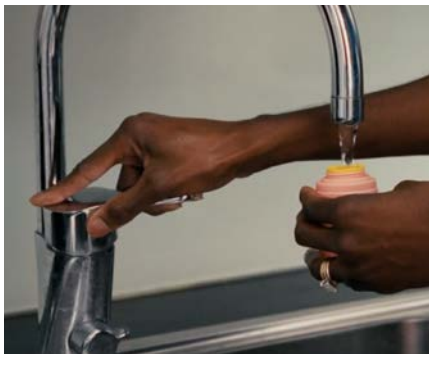
Refills for Lifelong Deo 2.0 only cost seven euros and last two months, which Adam hopes will make an all-natural, quality deodorant affordable to most people. He's now launching a new applicator that will make the deodorant even more accessible.

The new design also features interchangeable rollerballs, adding a playful element of customisation. 'The first launch of Lifelong Deo was all about putting luxury into deodorising', Adam explains; 'now it's about putting some fun into the mundane world of deodorants.'

LEFT TO RIGHT Lifelong Deo's plastic-free refills; the refills are added to the Lifelong Deo applicator; the liquid deo is created by adding water to the refill at home







TACKLING PLASTICS

The refills for Lifelong Deo 2.0 are 100% plastic free, and the applicator is made from 100% ocean-bound recycled plastic. For every deodorant applicator sold, Lifelong Deo also removes 1kg of plastic from the ocean through its partner, Seven Clean Seas.

'I love what they do', Adam says, 'and I love the sea. We have to protect the sea to protect our future. It's clear the governments don't care – and nor do many brands – so partnering with Seven Clean Seas is a blessing. I'm helping to stop plastic deodorants from being used, and Seven Clean Seas is removing polluting plastics from the seas.'

CROWDFUNDING SUCCESS

Lifelong Deo 2.0 is part of a broader plan to launch more plastic-free products, all under the Lifelong brand. Look out for a body wash, hand wash and shampoo – all with the same formula: a natural power that's simply mixed with water at home.

To date Adam has used Kickstarter as a way to get his products seen by millions of people. 'For those who aren't aware of Kickstarter, it's a platform that allows founders to launch new products', Adam explains. 'People back the campaign by giving a donation; in return they get products a few months later, once mass production is complete.'

A growing number of health and beauty companies are using crowdfunding as a way to raise money and build their brand, and Kickstarter is helping to support brands that truly want to make a difference. For Adam this has been a great way to test the market; to see whether people are ready for the product, get feedback from the community and iron out any small issues. 'This is all immensely helpful before scaling and going to market properly', Adam shares.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

For Adam, it's important for people to know that their daily routines can truly make a difference. 'Just by using a Lifelong Deo, one person can stop 400 plastic deodorants going to landfill. Just imagine if their partner, teenage children, friends and family did the same. It soon adds up!'

Now it's time for Lifelong to go mainstream so it can make a bigger impact. Adam's dream is for the Lifelong brand to remove 1 million kg of plastic waste from the seas, simply by creating products people love and use daily. 'What an achievement that would be', he says.

Find out more

- Information about Lifelong Deo 2.0 and how to support the Kickstarter campaign is at **kickstarter.com/projects/lifelongdeo/lifelongdeo?ref=3uz80y**

The rise of sustainable beauty

Natural beauty expert **Janey Lee Grace** on why ethical skincare is more than just a trend

The beauty industry is experiencing a transformative shift towards sustainability, with conscious consumers increasingly seeking products that deliver exceptional results while respecting both their skin and the planet.

This movement gained significant recognition at The Platinum Awards 2025, where outstanding natural health, beauty and wellbeing brands were celebrated for their innovation and integrity across the industry.

THE POWER OF NATURAL INGREDIENTS

Modern skincare has evolved far beyond the misconception that natural means less effective; today's ethical beauty brands are proving that performance and purity can work in perfect harmony.

2025's Platinum Award winners showcased this beautifully, with winners like Viridian's Organic Repair 5 Serum (£20.75) and Alcami Beauty's Facial Oil (price TBC) proving that plant-based formulations can deliver professional-grade results.

The benefits of choosing sustainable skincare extend beyond personal care. Natural ingredients are typically gentler on sensitive skin, reducing the risk of irritation and allergic reactions. They're also biodegradable, meaning they won't accumulate in our waterways or harm marine ecosystems when washed away.

INNOVATION MEETS RESPONSIBILITY

Platinum Award judges, including Jo Wood, Glynis Barber and Carrie Grant, joined me in highlighting how innovation drives the sustainable beauty movement at the awards ceremony, which was hosted by Hello Love and the Hello Beautiful Foundation.

Eco By Sonya Driver was one of the brands that swept up in multiple categories – taking home awards for its Golden Illuminiser (£31.95), Super Acai Exfoliator (£24.95) and Glory Veil SPF 50+ (£20.95) – proving that one company can excel across diverse product ranges while maintaining the very highest ethical standards.

Particularly noteworthy were the advances in specialist care, with Weleda's Arnica Collection (£8.50-£23.95) and Tribe517's HEAL Remedy (£42) winning recognition for addressing specific skin concerns using natural formulations. These products demonstrate that sustainable beauty isn't just about general skincare – it's capable of targeting complex dermatological needs, too.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Rhythm of Beauty Celestial Rose Cream; Viridian Organic Repair 5 Serum; Conscious Skincare Rejuvenate Day Cream; Weleda Solid Deodorant; Salt of the Earth Deodorant Spray; The Rose Tree Pomegranate & Rose Mask; Alcami Beauty Facial Oil; Eco By Sonya Golden Illuminiser; BuzzBalm's Pro Body Glow









REDUCED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Sustainable beauty brands are revolutionising packaging and production methods, too. Salt of the Earth's Oud & Bergamot Deodorant Spray (£7.49) shows this commitment; its refillable design is helping to reduce single-use plastic waste.

Similarly, Weleda's Solid Deodorants (£8.95) eliminate the need for aerosol containers, offering an eco-friendly alternative that doesn't compromise on effectiveness.

The environmental benefits multiply when consumers choose products from companies committed to sustainable sourcing, cruelty-free testing and minimal packaging. These choices collectively support a beauty industry that prioritises long-term environmental health over short-term profits.

THE FUTURE OF BEAUTY

Award-winning products – including The Rose Tree's Pomegranate & Rose Mask (£26), Rhythm of Beauty's Celestial Rose Cream (£55) and Conscious Skincare's Rejuvenate Day Cream (£32) – are part of a movement that's reshaping beauty standards. These companies prove we no longer need to choose between effective skincare and ethical consumption. There is no doubt that sustainable beauty has matured from a niche market into a sophisticated industry capable of meeting every skincare need. From innovative body care like BuzzBalm's Pro Body Glow (£29.99) to specialised feminine care from Bona Dea Naturals, ethical beauty brands are creating comprehensive solutions that honour both personal wellbeing and planetary health.

As consumers become increasingly conscious of their impact, choosing sustainable skincare becomes an investment in both personal health and global sustainability – a win-win approach to beauty that's here to stay.



Find out more

- Check out the full list of Janey's Platinum Award winners at **imperfectlynatural.com**

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MUSIC & CONSCIOUSNESS



OMMMbassadors **Carl Hayden Smith** & **Caz Coronel** share their experiences of music as sacred sound

Music can connect us in moments of joy and grief; it can lift our spirits and make our hearts soar in community, and is equally able to reach us in our deepest and most isolated states and spaces. Yet we know so little about how this relationship works, or how music could be used as a force for good by elevating consciousness in all living beings.

Carl Hayden Smith and Caz Coronel are working at the intersection of sound, nature, science and consciousness. They recently became 'OMMMbassadors', joining OMMM's network of leaders and creators who are dedicated to elevating global consciousness through spiritual engagement and environmental stewardship.

They told us how music has shaped their lives – and why we must never forget to listen.

CARL HAYDEN SMITH, Associate Professor of Media at UEL & founder of the Museum of Consciousness

For as long as I can remember, I've been fascinated by the invisible – by the frequencies, fields and patterns that shape reality but often go unheard.

My journey through sound and nature has been a continuous feedback loop; I have been learning to deeply listen and to help others do the same.

Over the past decade, my work has revolved around what I call hyperhumanism: a reimagining of technology not as a distraction from our humanity, but as a mirror that can re-awaken it. Rather than outsourcing our awareness to machines, we can design tools that expand perception, deepen compassion and serve to reconnect us with the intelligence of nature.

SHARED CONSCIOUSNESS

This philosophy underpins everything I create, from my regenerative research at the University of East London to my work with the Museum of Consciousness (MOC), a global project I founded to explore how sound can alter consciousness.

At its heart, the museum is a living experiment: we invite artists – from Jon Hopkins to Orbital, from Lisa Lashes and Tom Middleton to Alexandre Tannous – to produce audio experiences that reliably induce expanded states of awareness. However, it is not just about listening; it's about relationship.

The artist transmits their sound. The audience responds – not as consumers, but as co-creators and co-investigators. Then, through dialogue and reflection, we integrate what was learned. Over time, this circular process becomes a regenerative loop of shared consciousness.

MUSIC & THE AMAZON

My invitation to become an OMMMbassador felt like a natural extension of this work. OMMM is a constellation of kindred spirits, artists, scientists, healers and innovators united by a simple but radical idea: that sound, gratitude and intention are technologies of the heart, and the journey from the head to the heart is the greatest journey of all.

This November, that mission will take us to one of Earth's most sacred places: the Bolivian Amazon. With OMMM, Amazon for Life and local elders, we're creating *Love Your Mother – the World's First Concert for Nature*, a short film, sound study and offering for Mother Earth.

SONGS AS GIFTS

The Amazon is more than a location; it is consciousness itself. The MOC will lead a study observing how water, plants and the environment respond to intention and song. It's both analysis and ceremony; a merging of Indigenous wisdom and modern research, rooted in reverence and resonance.

The elders will open the space with prayer and sound, and the musicians will offer songs as gifts, not performances. Nature will be our audience, and every vibration will become part of the forest's feedback loop. The camera won't impose a story – it will listen, moving like wind through leaves. The resulting film, which will premiere at COP30, will be a love letter to the Earth, and a reminder that our inner state directly shapes our world.

FINDING OUR WAY BACK

For me, this project is about developing an 'ecology for the re-enchantment of life' and restoring our capacity for wonder. We live in an age that measures everything yet understands so little of what it means to be alive.

The Amazon teaches us that the planet is not a machine but is fully responsive and relational. When we meet it with gratitude, it reverberates. We are not here to save the planet; we are here to remember that we are the planet, we are nature and every cell of our being vibrates in rhythm with the rivers, the soil and the stars.

My hope is that through sound we can find our way back. When we listen deeply enough, the separation between self and world dissolves. There is only one song playing, and it's been playing since the beginning of time. When we quiet the noise and tune our attention, we can finally hear it again.

The Earth, the plants and the trees are all singing – all we must do is learn how to listen.

PHOTOGRAPHY JULIEN SHORT

CAZ CORONEL, composer, sound designer, producer & DJ

For many years my life was a wild ride of dizzying highs and crushing lows. I was brought up in a deeply religious family, whose main life lesson was that I did not exist and that my emotions were not real. Ironically, this message was delivered with aggressive passion.

By the time I was 16 I was a total mess of an unformulated identity, with extreme rapid-cycling bipolar.

Questions such as 'who am I?' and 'what is real?' haunted my life, and the search for authenticity became my life's mission.

This treacherous journey led me in countless directions, but one constant called me: music. At the same time crippling insecurity made performing a near-insurmountable mountain for me to climb.

THE FIRST STEP

In August 2022 I found Carl Hayden Smith at Medicine Festival. He asked me, in a multi-dimensional kind of way, if I knew anyone who made music with a specific purpose. I had been creating music for years but had rarely played it to anyone – though a recent encounter caused me to reply that yes, I did.

Just weeks before, I had been invited to the Monroe Institute to trial a new programme it was running. One of the trainers, Robert, asked me (jokingly, I later found out) to create a track that would put him in an enlightened state. No small ask! But the seed was planted and later that day the ingredients for this track came to me in a meditation. 'Paracusia for Robert' was born.

A month later I played my first Museum of Consciousness (MOC) – in a tiny tipi with one small Bluetooth speaker – to three people. Even though I was



a bit annoyed by the poor sound system, this was probably the biggest concert I could have handled at the time. Besides, having three people enjoy my music felt even better than DJing to thousands of people, something I was doing quite regularly at this point. I am forever grateful to Carl for giving me this opportunity as it was my first step to performing.

ENLIGHTENED EXPERIENCE

I started to create more functional music with purpose and playing more and more Museums of Consciousness. Carl found us increasingly fantastic places to play!

Along the way we have met so many incredible artists who all make music with purpose, often with a strong scientific background. Carl asked me to help him organise things so I created strategies to make the MOC run more efficiently.

Months later I sent 'Paracusia for Robert' back to the Monroe Institute to have brain entrainment added. These are modulating tones that encourage the brain into certain states. I asked for tones that might help with getting enlightened.

Without my knowledge it was then played at one of the Institute's workshops and a lady, Sheila Schwartz, actually had an enlightened experience! When Sheila found out that I wrote it, she and her husband offered to fund me to learn everything I could about what had created this response in her.

One of the results of this funding was to conduct experiments in Philadelphia using EEG machines and stroboscopic light to see what was going on in people's brains as they listened. We experimented with tracks with and without brain entrainment to observe the differences. I became fascinated by scientifically demonstrating what I intuitively knew: that music is a powerful healing tool and that intention is key.

SETTING INTENTION

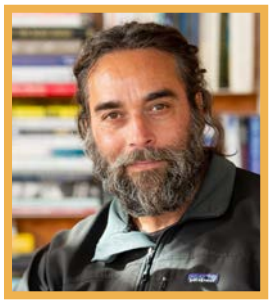
My intention became solidified: to put more love in the world and to elevate consciousness. I truly believe this is what is needed to stop the destruction of our planet and help heal humanity.

Once this goal was set, intuition became an aligned guide that I followed wholeheartedly. I started travelling the world, visiting sacred sites and places of high energy where I knew sound was key to the magic. These were places of power where I could learn about sound and create and channel more music.

My journey eventually led me to OMMM, where I found other people who were guided with love, intent and intuition to co-create harmony and wellbeing on our planet. I instantly knew I had found my people.

Find out more

- Carl's work with the Museum of Consciousness at New College, University of Oxford is at **themoc.org**
- Discover Caz's music and sound – for transcendent states and immersive spaces – at **cazcoronel.com**
- Information about OMMM and its network of OMMMbassadors is at **ommmpresents.com**



Remembering connection

Jarvis Smith shares his thoughts ahead of COP30

Everything we have ever built, owned, worn, eaten or loved has come from nature. Every building, smartphone, car, diamond, loaf of bread and sip of wine – all of it – has been drawn from the living body of our planet.

For centuries, we've treated that abundance as infinite; we've plundered forests, mined mountains and trawled oceans under the illusion that progress meant profit and that nature was an external resource.

Now the balance sheet has changed, because we're taking more from Earth each year than she can regenerate. 'Earth Overshoot Day' marks the date by which humans have used more resources than the planet can provide in a given year. This year, Earth Overshoot Day fell on 24 July; since that date we have been living in ecological deficit.

If a business behaved like that, it would be bankrupt. For some reason, when it comes to nature we behave like the account will never run dry.

We call the crisis 'climate change' or 'biodiversity loss'; these are very real issues that affect millions of lives, but they are symptoms of a deeper issue. The root cause is disconnection.

CHOOSING TO RECONNECT

At some stage in human development we stopped seeing ourselves as part of nature; we forgot that the air in our lungs, the water in our blood, the microbes in our gut and the soil beneath our feet are all interconnected.

When we choose to reconnect we are not indulging a luxury; studies show that time in nature reduces cortisol, boosts immunity and improves mental health.

When we walk barefoot on the earth, when we watch a sunrise or listen to birds singing, our nervous systems remember, and we reawaken a reverence that's powerful enough to change our behaviour in a profound way.

LIFE FINDS A WAY

As world leaders convene for COP30 in Brazil, it's important to recognise we need that shift more than ever. Decisions made at this climate conference will determine whether we continue the extractive story of the last 300 years or begin a new chapter, with reconnection as its central theme.

That's why I'm an OMMMbassador; OMMM is a movement – 'One Mind, Many Mothers' – with a mission to restore sacred relationship with the Earth. Its purpose is to curate events and employ the arts to awaken consciousness, and create spaces where humans and nature can remember each other again.

Nature doesn't need us to fix her; she needs us to stop pretending we're separate. Give her space, respect and time, and she will regenerate with breathtaking grace. Forests regrow. Rivers cleanse. Species return. Life finds a way, if we let it.

This is the lesson I wish every leader would carry to COP30: we don't need to save the planet, we need to stop destroying the systems that sustain us.



PHOTOGRAPHY ISTOCK

THERE'S STILL HOPE

Imagine diverting the trillions we pour into fossil fuels into soil regeneration, renewable energy, Indigenous stewardship and biodiversity credits. Imagine if we measured the health of ecosystems as our true wealth.

If we each choose to give back more than we take – in gratitude, in resources, in attention – then there's still hope. Our survival depends not on how much we can extract, but how deeply we can remember that we are nature, too.

CLEANER THAN YOUR AVERAGE POLITICIAN



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THE ETHICAL ONLINE STORE

A taste of Brazil

BOSH! cooks **Henry Firth** and **Ian Theasby** mark COP30 with two plant-based recipes inspired by South American flavours



As COP30 kicks off in Brazil, it feels only right to celebrate the bold, colourful flavours of South American food – with a planet-friendly twist. At BOSH! we've always believed food should be big on flavour and kind to the planet, and these dishes show just how easy that can be.

First up, our Chimichurri Couscous: a zingy, herby plate that's bursting with life. Punchy chimichurri brings freshness, spice and tang, while roasted veg and golden tofu give the dish depth, bite and balance. It's quick to prepare, great for sharing and perfect the next day as leftovers. A simple way to reduce waste while eating something delicious.

Then there's Moqueca – Brazil's famous fish stew reimagined the BOSH! way. Ours uses banana blossom and plant-based prawns simmered in coconut milk, peppers and spices. The result is sunshine in a bowl. Serve it with rice, gather your friends and you've got the kind of dish that makes you feel like you're celebrating, whether it's Christmas, a dinner party or just a Tuesday night.

Find out more

- For more plant-based recipe inspiration, head over to **bosh.tv**





Chimichurri Couscous Serves 4

If you're into punchy flavours, this dish is for you – it's a true taste explosion. There's tanginess, smokiness, spiciness, freshness, saltiness and zinginess. You name it, when it comes to flavour, this dish has got it. This will go down a treat at dinnertime, but will also be lovely the next day for lunch.

INGREDIENTS

- 120g couscous

For the roast veg

- 2 courgettes
- 2 red onions
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ lemon
- 3 jarred red peppers
- Salt

For the chimichurri

- Handful of fresh coriander
- Handful of fresh parsley
- ½ fresh red chilli
- 1 tbsp capers
- 4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp red wine vinegar
- Salt

For the tofu

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 150g smoked tofu

METHOD

Preheat oven to 250°C

Make the couscous

Put couscous in a large bowl. Pour over enough boiling water to just cover the grains. Cover and set aside.

Make the roast veg

Halve the courgettes lengthways, then slice thinly. Peel onions and cut into 8 wedges. Place courgettes, onions and whole garlic cloves in a roasting tray with olive oil and salt. Squeeze in lemon juice and add the squeezed lemon half. Roast at the top of the oven for 15 minutes, until soft and browned.

Make the chimichurri

Reserve a few herb leaves for garnish. Whizz remaining herbs, chilli, capers, olive oil, vinegar and salt in a food processor until smooth. Squeeze roasted garlic flesh from skins and add to processor. Pulse to combine.

Cook the tofu

Slice tofu into 3cm strips. Fry until golden all over.

To serve

Fluff couscous with a fork. Add half the chimichurri and mix. Add roasted veg, discard lemon and add sliced jarred peppers. Mix lightly. Divide into bowls. Drizzle with remaining chimichurri, lay tofu on top and sprinkle with reserved herbs.

Moqueca – Brazilian 'Fish' Stew

Serves 4

This Brazilian stew is fully loaded with beautiful, bright flavours that will make you want to go on holiday. Serve it with rice, kinda like a curry, or serve it in a bowl, kinda like a soup. Either way, moqueca is sunshine in a pot.

INGREDIENTS

For the rice

- ½ white onion
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 210g long-grain white rice
- 500ml boiling water
- Pinch of sea salt

For the stew

- 1 red onion
- 2 carrots
- 1 red pepper
- 1 yellow pepper
- 3 garlic cloves
- ½ fresh jalapeño chilli
- 400g fresh tomatoes
- 3 tbsp coconut oil
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1 × 400g tin banana blossom
- 150g plant-based prawns
- 1 × 400g tin coconut milk
- 250ml vegetable stock
- 2 limes
- Sea salt and black pepper

To serve

- 10g fresh coriander
- 1 lime

METHOD

Cook the rice

Dice the onion and grate the garlic. Heat olive oil in a saucepan, add onion and salt, fry 3–4 minutes until softened. Add garlic, fry 1 minute. Add rice and boiling water. Simmer with lid on for 15 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and leave to steam.

Prepare vegetables

Finely dice onion, carrots, peppers, garlic, jalapeño and tomatoes.

Start the moqueca

Heat coconut oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add vegetables, salt and cook 7–8 minutes until softened. Stir in tomato purée, paprika and cumin for 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and cook 8–10 minutes.

Finish the moqueca

Rinse banana blossom, chop into bite-sized pieces. Add to pan with prawns, coconut milk and stock. Simmer gently for 13–15 minutes.

To serve

Squeeze juice of 2 limes into the pan (about 4 tbsp). Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with coriander leaves. Fluff rice and serve with the stew, topped with extra lime wedges.



The organic farming challenge

Soil Association Certification's **Paige Tracey** on how we can overcome the barriers to organic food & farming



PHOTOGRAPHY THE COMMUNITY FARM

Earlier this year, Defra's Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) payments – which remunerated farmers in England for adopting more nature-friendly farming methods – abruptly ended and farmers wishing to convert to organic were left, for the first time in decades, without financial support.

The Soil Association and its partners have been able to work with the governments in Wales and Scotland to make sure conversion support is available, yet there is still great uncertainty for farmers in England.

FRUSTRATED FARMERS

In May there was a limited reopening for farmers who were midway through their SFI application – but confusion over what the scheme will look like in 2026 has made this a frustrating time.

'It has taken us 40 years to get our farm on the right track for biodiversity', said John Kerr, organic beef farmer and Soil Association ambassador. 'At times we have been able to call on grants but what we and new entrants to organic and sustainable farming really need is clarity and support for the long term, so we can make the changes necessary for nature.' John added that the limited re-opening for previous SFI applicants feels 'like a bit of a sticking plaster over a major mistake to save face', adding that details are lacking and there are restrictions on what support is available.

WHY ORGANIC MAKES SENSE

We know that organic farming is a tried and tested method for supporting nature, with an average of 30% more species biodiversity on organic farms compared with non-organic.

Organic farming also helps to support healthier soils, as techniques like herbal leys (used instead of artificial fertilisers), compost, manure and long and diverse farm rotations help to create deep, healthy soil that holds more water. Soils on organic farms also hold twice as much carbon as non-organic, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

In addition to the many benefits of organic farming, artificial inputs like nitrate fertiliser do not come cheap – and are rising in cost. For farmers, looking at more resilient and lower input systems like organic makes sense for long-term economic and environmental reasons, yet for many the cost of conversion is currently a barrier.

AN ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

When there is decisive government action to support nature-friendly farming, the results speak for themselves. Government support for an Organic Action Plan in Scotland has seen the amount of land being farmed organically increase by almost 12% in 2024 (the most recent data available).

An English Organic Action Plan would be a welcome move by Defra; it has been requested not just from the Soil Association but also from environmental NGOs including RSPB, National Trust, River Action, Wildlife and Countryside Link and various Wildlife Trusts. At the end of 2024 these organisations signed an open letter, coordinated by the Soil Association, to the then Farming Minister Daniel Zeichner, calling for a target of 10% of UK land to be farmed organically by 2030.

That target is not without precedent – it is the EU average for land farmed organically. In some countries the figure is as high as 20%, yet the latest available data show the UK has remained static at 3%.

SHOPPERS WANT ORGANIC

Consumer demand for organic food is strong – and rising. The latest Nielsen data show that supermarket sales of organic food and drink saw continued growth in the first half of 2025, rising 8.8% in value and 4.4% in units (volume) year on year.

The growing retail availability of organic products is helping to fuel this growth, accompanied by rising consumer demand for healthy, minimally processed and sustainably produced food. Shoppers are increasingly looking for food that has been produced in a way that minimises pesticide use and safeguards higher levels of animal welfare.

The Soil Association is actively pushing for decisive government action to support organic production and all its public benefits. This would also make the UK market less dependant on imports – a reliance that generates emissions while failing to support British farmers. Public support for the domestic agriculture industry is high, with over seven in 10 (72%) of surveyed Brits saying they prefer to buy British-grown fruit and vegetables.

THE PEAS PILOT

The Soil Association is also pushing for more targets for organic food in public procurement as another way to support organic farming in the UK. Again, there have been great things happening across the border in Scotland. The 'Give Peas a Chance' pilot, funded by Sustain's Bridging the Gap programme in partnership with Soil Association Scotland, brought locally grown peas to the plates of thousands of schoolchildren in Aberdeen. The initiative not only opened up a new route to market for a local organic grower, but also ensured children were getting a healthy protein source in their diets.

Jenny Cowie, Cook in Charge at Bridge Don Academy, one of the schools involved in the pilot, said: 'I was really shocked – and I've been a cook for years – about putting [peas] into muffins and cookies[...] A lot of people probably think you can make soup with them and that's it. But you can do so much with peas. And the more I was reading into them, the nutritional value is really high.'

Ideas like this mean everyone is a winner – isn't it time the UK government took note and helped similar initiatives happen on a larger scale?

Find out more

- Information about the Soil Association and what it's doing to support the nation's health is at **soilassociation.org**

COMPETITIONS

We've got our hands on a bunch of prizes from fantastic companies that are doing things differently. We love them all and we want to give you a chance to get to know them, too – so we're running these competitions so you can have a go and see for yourself!

We've handpicked this selection of green pearls – including all-natural food, detox and personal care products, plus Jonathon Porritt's latest book – to help set you on a path to a lighter lifestyle.

To enter and view any Ts & Cs, visit mygreenpod.com

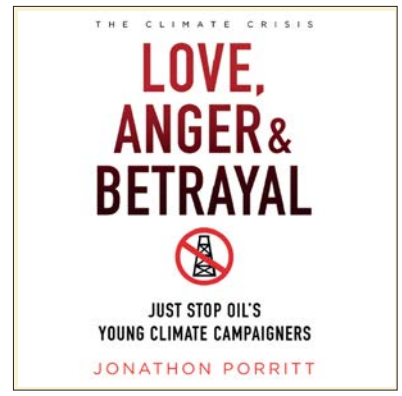


WIN

A LIFELONG DEO STARTER PACK

Two readers will win Lifelong's luxury refillable deodorant, plus a year's supply of natural refillable deodorant! Five runners-up will receive a Lifelong Starter Pack with a six-month refill supply.

Deadline for entries: 01.02.26



WIN

A COPY OF LOVE, ANGER & BETRAYAL

10 winners will receive a copy of Jonathon Porritt's new book, co-authored with 26 young climate campaigners from Just Stop Oil, making the case for far more urgent action on the climate crisis.

Deadline for entries: 01.12.25



WIN

AN AURA SEA SALT DUO

10 readers will receive a pair of organic, vitamin D-boosted Aura Sea Salts.

Deadline for entries: 01.12.25





WIN

£150 OF NATURAL SKINCARE FROM NEVE'S BEES

One winner will be nourished from head to toe with a set of award-winning skincare from Neve's Bees. Three runners-up will receive a Neve's Bees Full Facial Gift Range, worth £100.

Deadline for entries: 01.12.25



WIN

A NATURAL DETOX KIT

We're giving one lucky winner a Complete Five-Day Colon Cleanse and a Natural Parasite Herbal Treatment Liquid, courtesy of Heelnatuurlijk.com.

Deadline for entries: 01.02.26


LOVE
&
POWER
OCTOPUS ENERGY
octopus energy