

Why Nature Is Demanding We Pay Attention

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Let's be honest, 'biodiversity impacts' and 'nature-related risks' aren't phrases that the gold market has been overly preoccupied with or focused on in the past. But if we care at all about stable societies, thriving economies, and a future that isn't, well, grey and grim, then this issue – the health of ecosystems and the planet's flora and fauna – is well worth our attention. It has been something we at the World Gold Council (WGC) have now started to look at more closely. And we're pleased to find that many players in the gold mining industry were well ahead of us.

The World Gold Council has, over the last year or so, expanded its research focus from climate change to a much wider environmental lens, recognising that climate stability and socio-economic development are inseparable from healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. In short: you can't have a stable climate or a resilient economy if you're trashing the natural world. Sadly, the last half century has indeed been a story of reckless destruction and degradation. The World Wildlife Fund recently reported that since 1970 there has been a catastrophic 73% decline in the average size of wildlife populations.

But nature and biodiversity loss aren't just "green" issues. They are business issues too. Many sectors of the economy are deeply dependent on ecosystem services: water, pollination, soil health, and more, underpin a substantial portion – up to half, according to PwC – of global GDP. When these systems are degraded, it's not just wildlife that suffers; it's jobs, communities, and economies.



Image courtesy of Equinox Gold

This therefore matters deeply to all sectors, all value chains, and all their stakeholders. Industries and markets need to better understand their relationship with nature - both the risks

and vulnerabilities that may affect them and, also, their potential contributions to ecosystem protection, resilience and rehabilitation.

To understand this relationship as it relates to gold – and, specifically, gold mining where the impacts are likely most concentrated - we have spent the last year (with the research team from S&P Global Sustainable¹) mapping out the sector's global 'nature risk profile'. The findings from our analysis are described in our new report (*[Gold, Nature and Biodiversity](#)*) which also details a range of practical responses and solutions implemented at or around gold mine locations.

It is often suggested that, unlike climate change mitigation – focused on the reduction of greenhouse gases – nature and biodiversity are far too complex to measure in a consistent way. But using a recently defined methodology (that, whilst still evolving, is already being presented as a solution to institutional investors and policy makers), we've been able to arrive at a detailed overview of sectoral impacts and vulnerabilities.

The overarching approach in our new report can be seen to mirror the approach we developed a few years ago when looking at physical climate impacts and local adaptation and resilience responses at and around gold mine sites. For a global risk overview, we need to adopt a robust methodology that can be applied to diverse sites and locations. But to understand what 'good practice' and practical solutions look like, we also need to focus on site-specific details and actions. Fortunately, mining company disclosures on these matters have evolved rapidly and, looking at our Member companies' outputs, we found a wealth of examples to explore in more detail.

We were, frankly, pleasantly surprised that there is already substantial evidence in company reporting on nature-related issues of a widespread commitment to transparency, good practice, protection and rehabilitation — not just minimising harm but actively restoring nature where possible. The report describes a wide range of WGC Member-led initiatives to protect a wide range of species – from buttercups to bats, from cacti to chimpanzees. Hearteningly, this often extends to locations well beyond the mine site, with many solutions seeking to address negative impacts not directly associated with mining operations or current activities. Acknowledgement of historical impacts – from mining but also from other economic activities – and a sensitivity to communities' relationships with local ecosystems were a feature of many reported initiatives.

The report also highlights the importance of frameworks like the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Task Force on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD). These aren't just buzzwords — they're already shaping how companies disclose, manage, and reduce their impacts on nature.

And underpinning these drivers of change is a growing recognition that the 'Big Picture' challenges we face in defining and planning for a sustainable future are intrinsically interconnected, with nature and biodiversity as 'foundational'. They underpin food security, water supply, climate regulation, and the resilience of communities. Lose them, and you lose the building blocks of prosperity and stability. When these systems break down, costs rise, risks multiply, and economies become more fragile.

The *Gold, Nature and Biodiversity* report is our first step in establishing a solid base of data and understanding to support further moves across the gold industry to respond to nature-related risks and define practical solutions. Ultimately, we hope that this will also encourage further industry actions to help shift us from a position of inflicting no further harm to a more positive outlook. Simply put, we now recognise that the health of our economies and societies depends

on the health of the natural world—and that the gold sector, like all sectors, has both a responsibility and an opportunity to lead.

So, next time you hear us talk of ‘nature’ and ‘biodiversity’, don’t think we’re discussing something remote and unrelated to your daily business or your daily life. Rather, think of these discussions (and this research) as examining the ultimate insurance policy for our shared future. Tackling these issues isn’t just the job of governments or NGOs. It’s a shared responsibility, and business has a crucial role to play — not just in reducing harm, but in driving positive change and supporting the resilience of people and planet. It may be surprising to some, but it looks like responsible gold miners may have been considering these issues for quite some time.