



World Nature Conservation Day

Every 28 July, **World Nature Conservation Day** invites us to pause and ask ourselves a question: ***Are we treating the planet as though we intend to stay?*** The day was created to celebrate Earth's life-support systems and to inspire citizens, businesses, and governments to protect them for future generations.

A textbook market failure

Markets are brilliant at pricing steel, smartphones, and streaming subscriptions. They are terrible at pricing coral reefs, pollination, or a stable climate. When a business pays nothing for degrading our ecology or climate, **society ends up footing the bill later** – through higher insurance premiums, eroded coastlines, and biodiversity rescue plans. Economists call this a “**negative externality,**” but in plain language it's a **cost we all share without ever agreeing to.**

Offsets and credits

Carbon offsets and **biodiversity credits** attempt to correct that failure. By attaching a price to avoided emissions or restored habitats, they:

- Channel **private money into conservation.**
- Offer **flexibility.** Companies that can't decarbonise overnight can fund high-quality projects while they retool their operations.
- Shine a spotlight on **nature's worth.** Every tonne of carbon or hectare of mangrove that earns revenue reminds boardrooms that ecosystems are productive assets, not scenery.

Yet the model has **flaws.**

- **Verification standards vary,** making it hard to prove that a forest protected today won't be logged tomorrow.
- Firms may view credits as a **license to pollute,** claiming “net-zero” status while their absolute emissions keep rising.
- Critics argue that this is **greenwashing** – selling virtue without changing behaviour – and that schemes can **shift conservation duties** onto poorer communities.⁴

Where we land

Putting a price on clean air or thriving wetlands may feel pragmatic, but it also **risks deepening the very mind-set that caused the crisis: viewing nature as a commodity.** Climate and Ecological systems are interacting and complex, making it **impossible to accurately price them.** As changes become irreversible, today's market is also **pricing the natural world on behalf of all future generations.** Our focus on the present provides an uncomfortable answer to the opening question: ***Are we treating the planet as though we intend to stay?***

References

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