## PEOPLE

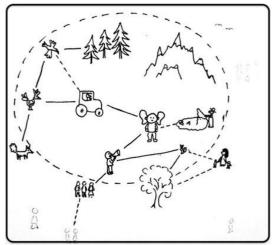
*The value of listening and listening for values in conservation* Sam Staddon, Anja Byg, Mollie Chapman, Robert Fish, Alice Hague, Katie Horgan

Biodiversity conservation and practices that protect nature are underpinned by relationships - relationships between different groups of people (e.g. conservation groups and farmers), within groups of people (e.g. farmers), and between people and nature (e.g. people and farm animals or forests). Generating and cultivating productive relationships depends on acts of listening.

While formal and time-bound processes of stakeholder engagement and dialogue receive much attention in conservation science, the value of the 'simple' act of listening, including as an everyday 'informal' and ongoing practice, does not typically receive the same attention. This paper explores and accounts for the value and role of listening in conservation research and practice; what it does, why it is necessary, how it builds over time, and the spaces and contexts which enable 'deep' listening, leading to reciprocal conversations and meaningful relationships. To that end, we discuss both the value of listening—i.e., why it is important for conservation—as well as the need to listen for values—i.e., the role of listening to understand human-nature relationships and values.

In this paper, we explore what it means to 'listen well' within the context of conservation, highlighting the importance of recognising listening as a relationship and our positions and powers within those relationships, the need to care for the relationship through respect and empathy, and the building of inclusive relationships of listening by attending to how space and time influences understanding. We offer examples of how researchers and practitioners can create spaces for listening, illustrating our discussion with short personal reflections about listening practices gained through our various conservation and research careers.

The goal of our paper is to provide approaches and ideas which help the reader – academic and practitioner – to both understand and articulate the value of listening in conservation and when considering relational values of nature. We hope to inspire the wider use of listeningbased approaches in conservation research and practice, and the recognition and support from senior managers and funders of what is needed to promote long term and meaningful relationships between people and nature.



Listening happens as part of a web of relationships between people and nature, with stronger and weaker connections, and some exclusions (represented here by their position outside of the dashed circle). Listening well requires us to consider issues such as who is listening to whom (including humans and nonhumans), where are they listening from, who is speaking for others and on what basis, and who is excluded or not being heard. Credit: Anya Byg

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