



BETTER CONVERSATIONS ABOUT NATURE

TEN TOP TOOLS

If you're reading this, you probably already know that conversations about our relationship with wild nature can be difficult. People hold strong views on everything from gulls stealing chips to sparrowhawks preying on garden birds to the reintroduction of large carnivores.

Fuelled by misinformation and online culture wars, these conversations often become highly charged and deeply personal. As a result, many people choose not to engage.

But when we retreat from difficult interactions, we lose the opportunity to learn from others, share perspectives, and find common ground.

This guide offers simple techniques to help us raise challenging issues and discuss differing viewpoints in a spirit of respect and empathy.

A faint, light gray background illustration showing the silhouettes of two people's heads and shoulders in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. The person on the left is slightly larger and more prominent than the person on the right.

Better conversations
lead to better outcomes...
for people and nature.

#1. It's not about being 'right'

Better conversations start with a desire to understand and resolve differences – not to win an argument, prove someone wrong, or 'educate' the other person.

#2. Humility is a virtue

None of us knows everything. Healthy dialogue relies on our ability to truly listen to others and our willingness to admit when we get things wrong.

#3. Understand values

Our values shape who we are and what we believe. Empathising with the values of others helps us see the world through different lenses.

#4. Our hearts are in charge

Facts and figures rarely determine people's actions. Instead, emotions and instincts guide our choices. Recognising this can help us navigate difficult conversations.

#5. Think beyond the echo chamber

We all tend to seek out and repeat narratives that reinforce our existing beliefs. Stay open to new evidence and be willing to reconsider your views.

#6. Be a critical thinker

Good judgment requires us to question ideas, interrogate evidence, and recognise bias, rather than accepting information at face value.

#7. Don't let yesterday define today

It's all too easy to dwell on past grievances or historical grudges. Focus on the issue at hand and work towards solutions rather than assigning blame.

#8. Don't make it personal

Healthy discussions challenge ideas, not people. We can disagree with opinions without attacking the individual. Be kind, stay calm, and keep the conversation respectful.

#9. Think before tapping

Online conversations can quickly become toxic. Before posting on socials, ask yourself: Would I say this face to face? If not, pause and respond constructively.

#10. Seek out common ground

Finding shared values or interests makes difficult conversations easier. It helps reduce tension and moves the discussion away from the "us versus them" mentality.



AT THE EDGE

Conversations from the human-wildlife faultline

At the Edge is an independent media and communications platform exploring new ways for people and wildlife to thrive together.

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