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Our planet is currently in a crisis. We are often able to remain ignorant to the crisis at hand, sheltered in quiet corners like Wales, surrounded by buzzing bees and singing birds, but it's happening and it is happening fast. Our planet has never experienced a species as destructive as the *Homo sapien*, and without sounding too dramatic, our endless need for consumption, if left alone, will be the end of us. Fast fashion, farming intensification, food waste and single use plastic are just a few of the many pressures that we push onto our precious floating rock. It is hence now, more than ever, very important that we come together and take action. Now, this does not mean that action needs to be massive, in fact small acts do all add up. For example, part of my job with INCC (Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru) involves invasive species management - pulling up Himalayan balsam, one plant at a time!



I am a young adult living in South Wales and I have been privileged enough to of grown up in the lush woods and valleys of South Wales, and so I have always had a deep connection to nature, and as I have grown older, I have learnt to understand the inherent and steadfast importance of nature, how we are nature and without its balance there would be no life, and yes, there would be no 'us'. I jump at any chance to work in conservation and so getting the job with the INCC was right up my street and a true blessing. Here, I know I am making a difference, in a small way, but it is a step in the right direction. The INCC's purchase and conservation of the Llwyndewi reserve, where I am Nature Reserve Warden, is creating a space where nature can thrive and an eco-system can live in balance.

I believe that the key to saving our world really is the younger generation. The younger generation are the future, as this is who will be inheriting this planet, that has been so stripped and punished for so many years. However, without understanding nature, why would people want to protect it? From personal experience, I believe that being introduced to wildlife and ecology from a young age is key to connecting people with the land, and therefore ensuring its future. Children who have grown up in cities, go to school in urban environments, come home to a house in an urban environment, grow up to go to work in an urban environment, are prone to living in an echo chamber of brick buildings and petrol fumes; who may never understand that trees can talk to each other through a mycorrhizal network of fungi within the soil, or that Buzzards mate for life, or that each bird has a different variety of songs that

allow them to communicate to one another, and most important of all - that we are nature; and without it, we are nothing.

One of the most important steps we can take now is to connect young people with nature. We need to make it easier and more inviting for younger generations to get outside, get involved, and feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the natural world around them. Volunteering projects, like 'balsam bashing' or habitat restoration days, are not only a brilliant way to help wildlife, but also to create meaningful experiences that stay with people for life. It's important that these opportunities are open to everyone from all ethnic and economic backgrounds. At the moment, there's still a lack of diversity in conservation spaces, and that needs to change. If we truly want to protect nature, we must ensure that everyone feels welcome in it. Nature should not be the preserve of a privileged few, it is open to all. Now more than ever, we need to work together, not in isolation. Social media can play a powerful role in this. It's one of the most effective tools we have to reach younger audiences and urban communities who may not have easy access to green spaces. But beyond just awareness, we need action; community events, inclusive outreach, and local partnerships that break down barriers and build lasting connections between people and place.

Amid a growing mental health crisis, it's easy to forget that our bodies and minds are wired for nature. We subconsciously crave birdsong, open skies and trees, many people don't even realise what's missing until they find it. That reconnection can be profoundly healing. Organisations like the INCC (Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru) are playing a role in this mission, not just by protecting wildlife, but by creating opportunities for young people to understand and support it. Our work is helping to grow a new generation of conservationists who see the natural world not as something distant, but as something precious and worth fighting for. This is how change begins through action, inclusion, and shared purpose. And there's no time to waste.