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Media release

Communique from *Wild Things: addressing terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity loss*

The EDS *Wild Things* Conference is off to a flying start. The day has been challenging and invigorating, with an incredible line-up of international and domestic speakers.

The day began with some of New Zealand's leading scientific experts presenting on biodiversity state and trend, led by Dr Bill Lee of Landcare Research. The weight of evidence is astonishing: New Zealand has a biodiversity crisis and urgent change is needed.

Three key subjects were explored in today's session: the implementation gap, the need to upscale conservation effort and the political landscape.

International Keynote Shari Clare of Alberta, Canada discussed the difference between how policy appears written down and how it is implemented – noting the effects of agency capture and bureaucratic slippage. She demonstrated that the difference between policy as written and policy as implemented can sometimes be enormous.

Biodiversity loss is continuing apace in New Zealand and there is a need to upscale efforts. The excellent labours of Reconnecting Northland and the measurable outcomes from collective pest control efforts demonstrate the value of collaboration and working together to make conservation dollars and energy stretch.

Labour leader Andrew Little set out his commitment to good environmental outcomes and the pressing need to address climate change in a keynote address to the conference.

Vanishing Nature articulated the impact of political decision-making on the environment, and the conference was well-attended by a range of elected representatives including Green Party Co-leader James Shaw, Green MP Eugenie Sage, National MP Todd Muller and NZ First MP Richard Prosser.

Emerging themes include the need to engage young New Zealanders in conservation, to share resources and energy whenever possible to achieve landscape level change and to play close attention to political drivers of environmental outcomes.

There was a call to reform the tax system to encourage greater philanthropy in New Zealand.

Wild Things has been the biggest conference EDS has ever had with well over 300 attendees from all walks of life. It gives us enormous confidence that there is a public appetite to discuss and arrest the decline of our natural heritage, and turn the trends around through clever thinking and novel ideas.