

In developing the podcast, what are the keys that have guided your work?

Our focus is very much on highlighting compelling human-interest stories from the conservation world and bringing these stories to life. We made it a narrative podcast with the central focus on the first-person story of the conservationist, anchored by Kate Humble's narration and our founder, Edward Whitley's introduction. It has a sense of a journalistic voice. (Sarah Treanor and I are both former BBC radio journalists.)

How to Save It is WFN's first foray into audio where podcasts are increasingly regarded as a trusted source of information, attracting highly engaged audiences. Our biggest audiences are in the UK and the US which is consistent with the size of these burgeoning markets. Almost [12 million people](#) in the UK listen to a podcast each week with [100 million](#) in the U.S.

Our podcast is a natural complement to the films that Sir David Attenborough, our ambassador, narrates for our award-winning community of conservationists which has grown to 220 individuals. While the films are short - typically about 3-4 minutes long (sharing an example of [Dr Purnima Barman's](#)), the podcast, at about 14 mins, gives an opportunity to hear more from the conservationists and educate listeners on their work.

How do you always try to connect directly with the communities you are reporting on? How important is this for climate change communication?

It's imperative that stories are told by local or Indigenous people and at WFN we only recognise grassroots conservationists from the Global South with awards. Typically, the conservationists are embedded in local communities or are originally from them. While their work must be driven by science, they don't have to be scientists: Leroy Ignacio from Guyana (episode 6) is a perfect example of an Indigenous community's success in safeguarding the Red Siskin songbird and its habitat. Leroy has no scientific training but he accompanied the Smithsonian scientists who first identified the small population of Red Siskin birds in Guyana. That inspired him to create the country's first Indigenous-led conservation NGO which he is expanding as economic development accelerates threats to the bird's habitat. It's an inspiring example of Indigenous people taking ownership. The future of biodiversity is in their hands.

How do you select stories?

The first season focused on conservationists who won awards in 2024. But we plan to mix up the format by dropping episodes throughout the year. We will be recording a live interview about the Amazon with two of our most experienced conservationists, from Brazil and Colombia, in December. Please tune in!

The podcast often covers very local and specific contexts. What do you think are the main difficulties in communicating these stories?

The main difficulty with traditional media is that there are not many journalists focused on covering biodiversity - most are restricted to covering biodiversity through the lens of climate change and how it relates to food security or carbon trading. This means that a lot of inspiring conservation stories go untold. Our network of conservationists do not have big communications departments to help amplify their work. This is where we can help -- with social media, press, film and now podcasts.

In order to address the most controversial topics (e.g. climate denial) through podcasts, what narrative and communication skills should science communicators acquire?

Climate denial is the enemy of hope. What we are trying to communicate is a sense that action can defeat the sense of powerlessness that people feel. The conservationists are facing myriad challenges - drought, wildfires, disinformation around the species they are trying to protect, sometimes hostile governments, and more, but refuse to give up hope. Edward Whitley talks about this in [this interview](#) with Sir David Attenborough.

For complex issues such as the environmental crisis, how can sound design be best used to engage listeners emotionally and intellectually?

In our series, the goal was to take listeners to another place, on a journey around the world. In episode 2 with Naomi Longa, a young conservationist in Papua New Guinea who leads an all-female NGO working to protect coral reefs, we layered local songs, the sound of waves, boats, and even the sound of technology to represent AI, to conjure a sense of listeners being with Naomi in Kimbe Bay.

What are the main aspects that make climate communication particularly relevant to podcasts?

Trust. Authenticity. Facts. Hearing directly from real people on the front lines. Podcasts have become a hugely popular and valued source of news and education as traditional media have become more fragmented.

How does the choice of a medium such as podcasts also serve the objectives of your NGO?

Our objective is to find and fund grassroots conservationists in the Global South and to put them on the international stage with recognition through an award in London presented by our patron, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, a film by Sir David Attenborough and a communications campaign. This helps them unlock opportunities and gives them leverage in their home countries. The initial award is just the beginning of the relationship with the Whitley Fund for Nature. Sixty percent of funding awarded has been directed to the conservationists' follow-on grants, supporting their ongoing projects which removes uncertainty about the future of their work.

One last personal question) Are there criteria, sound design choices that lead you to choose a (scientific) podcast to listen to?

No criteria but some of our favourites include: Rare Earth from the BBC which is a mix of conversation in the studio with high-quality original reporting as well as Shankar Vedantam's award-winning Hidden Brain.