

Villars Institute Summit 2025

19-21 March

Villars-sur-Ollon, Switzerland



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1. About the Villars Summit

The Villars Institute was established in 2022 as a nonprofit foundation aimed at accelerating the protection of biodiversity, reduction of carbon emissions, and restoration of nature through systems thinking and systems leadership.

The third edition of the Villars Institute Summit gathered experts, executives, conservation leaders, entrepreneurs and philanthropists on 19-21 March 2025 at the Villars Palace in Villars-sur-Ollon, in the heart of the Swiss Alps. Three immersive, interactive and transformative days dedicated to exploring our planet's most pressing challenges at the intersection of biodiversity, climate, nature, policy, equity and technology.

The underlying mantra: interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and ecopreneurial collaboration—making the Summit more than just an event, but a true catalyst for systems change.

Villars Summit 2025



Over
350

experts,
executives,
entrepreneurs,
conservation leaders
and philanthropists



51%

49%

From over
270
Organizations



40+
Nationalities

20
Villars Fellows



Villars Reviews by Villars Fellows

A group of 20 Villars Fellows — young change-makers between the ages of 13-19 nominated by the [Villars Institute's Talent Partners](#) around the world to be part of the prestigious Villars Fellowship program — actively participate in the Summit each year and serve as rapporteurs, bringing fresh perspectives and capturing insights from each session. These rapporteur reports are published online on [The Villars Review - Fresh Perspectives For Future Generations](#).



2. Navigating the Outlook for a Sustainable Planet

The planet is on track to exceed 1.5°C of warming within the next three years, while protected and conserved areas must nearly double on land and more than triple in the ocean by 2030 to meet global biodiversity targets.

What does the long-term future hold for ensuring the world continues to be habitable and sustainable?

Key insights: the protection and conservation of the nature's "right 30%" is our shared responsibility and requires combining local action, data-driven decision-making and inspiring storytelling...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

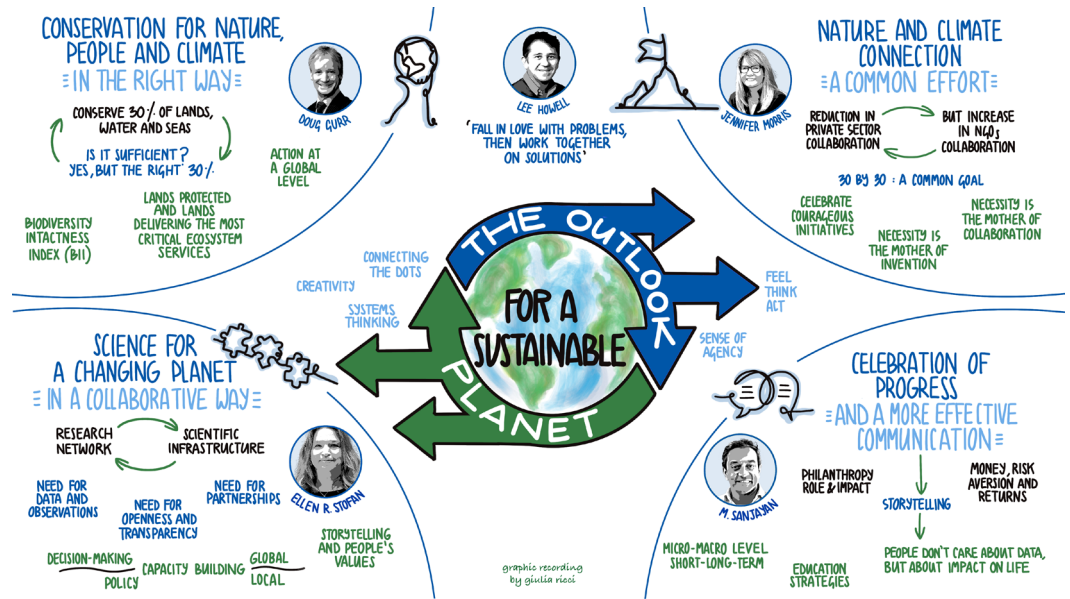
With:

- Doug Gurr, Director, Natural History Museum
- Jennifer Morris, CEO, The Nature Conservancy
- M. Sanjayan, CEO, Conservation International
- Ellen Stofan, Under Secretary for Science and Research, Smithsonian Institution
- Moderator: Lee Howell, Executive Director, Villars Institute



We've got 100+ countries agreeing to protect 30% of the planet, land and water. That's worth celebrating.

M. Sanjayan
CEO, Conservation International



Related Sessions

Rethinking the Climate & Energy Landscape

Global temperatures reached unprecedented highs in 2024 with two-thirds of Earth's surface experiencing record heat while more than 40% of the world's electricity came from zero-carbon sources for the first time in 2023.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Rethinking the Biodiversity & Nature Landscape

The WWF's Living Planet Report highlighted a catastrophic 73% decline in global wildlife populations over the past 50 years.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Rethinking the Sustainability & ESG Landscape

ShareAction recently published that only 4 out of 279 environmental, social and governance (ESG) shareholder resolutions put forward at annual general meetings last year in the UK, Europe and the US secured majority support.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Rethinking the Economic & Financial Landscape

The 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-29) established a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, mandating developed countries to mobilize 300 billion USD annually by 2035 to support climate actions in developing nations.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)



3. Protecting Biodiversity and Restoring Nature at Scale

Globally, the per capita availability of both renewable and non-renewable natural resources has declined by nearly 40%. With COP30 taking place in November 2025 in Belém, Brazil, a rainforest city at the mouth of the Amazon, it is the first COP to ever take place at the epicenter of the climate and biodiversity crises.

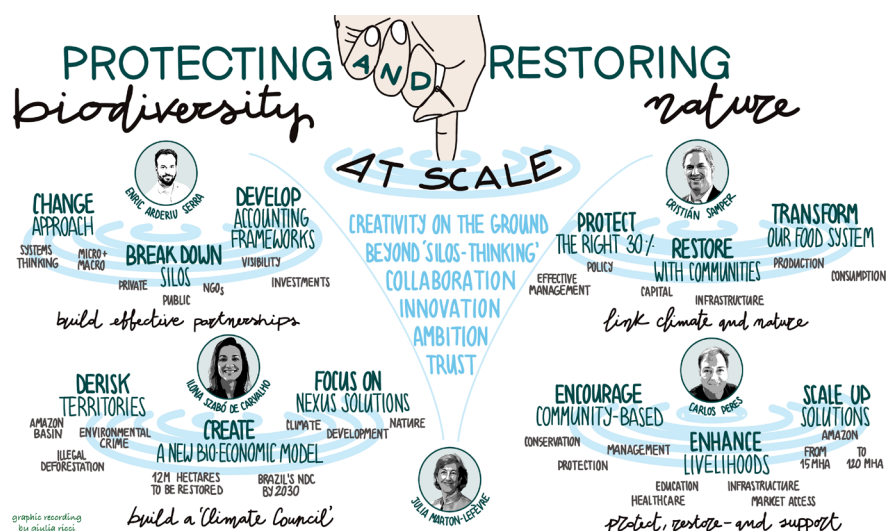
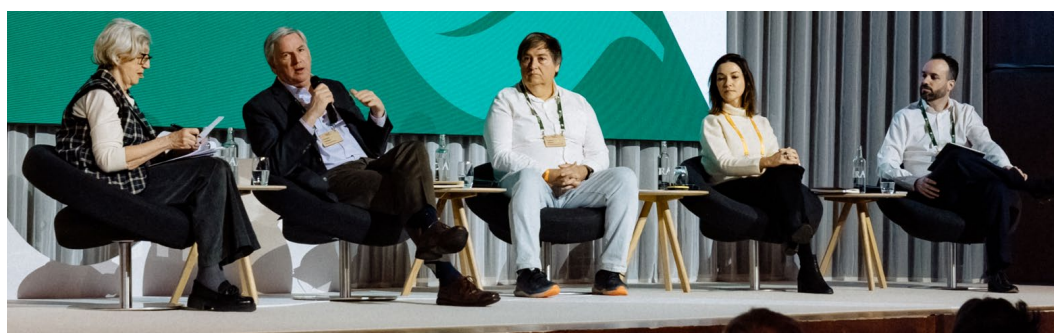
How can we protect biodiversity and restore nature which represents half of global GDP?

Key insights: we cannot protect and restore our planet without transforming our food systems, encouraging community-based conservation models, reducing environmental crimes, giving visibility to accounting frameworks...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

With:

- Enric Arderiu Serra, Global Head of Environmental Products, Mercuria
- Carlos Peres, Professor of Conservation Biology, University of East Anglia; Frontiers Planet Prize 2023
- Cristián Samper, Managing Director and Leader for Nature Solutions, Bezos Earth Fund
- Ilona Szabó de Carvalho, President, Igarapé Institute
- Moderator: Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Chair, Villars Institute



Related Sessions

Turning Points for Nature: Harmful Subsidies

According to the IPBES Nexus Assessment 1.7 trillion USD is spent annually on public subsidies that damage biodiversity, distort trade, and overuse natural resources.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Turning Points for Nature: Environmental Crime

Environmental crime is the third largest criminal activity in the world, costing 110-281 billion USD per year.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Turning Points for Nature: Non-financial Reporting

Advancements in non-financial reporting to protect nature and biodiversity include the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN).

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Turning Points for Nature: Geospatial Technology

One of the Global Biodiversity Framework's 2030 targets is for companies and financial institutions to regularly monitor, assess, and disclose biodiversity risks.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)



Opportunities for Collaboration on Measuring and Monitoring Biodiversity

Key ideas include:

- using harmonized data to develop a standardized framework for assessing biodiversity by 2026, in time for COP 17 in Armenia.
- promoting collaboration between private sector and local Indigenous communities.
- encouraging the private sector to adopt transparency and financial accountability strategies for building trust among stakeholders.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

There's no 1.5C global warming without the Amazon Basin...but its new economic models could dictate the next 100 years.

Ilona Szabó de Carvalho

President, Igarapé Institute



4. Transitioning Towards A Nature-Positive Economy

The equivalent of over 33 trillion USD is provided annually by the world's diverse ecosystems in terms of services. Despite this immense value, natural assets remain largely unaccounted for in corporate and financial decision-making.

How can we transition to an economic model that recognizes and invests in nature as a vital asset rather than a mere externality?

Key insights: we need to move from project-based efforts to jurisdictional approaches; from small-scale initiatives to large-scale collaborations; and from relying solely on carbon credits to exploring innovative instruments like carbon and nature-based dividends or equity shares...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

With:

- Naoko Ishii, Professor and Director, Centre for Global Commons, The University of Tokyo
- Patrick Odier, Chairman, Building Bridges Foundation
- Beatrice Weder Di Mauro, Professor, Geneva Graduate Institute; Chair, Hoffmann Centre for Global Sustainability
- Moderator: Marco Lambertini, Convener, Nature Positive Initiative

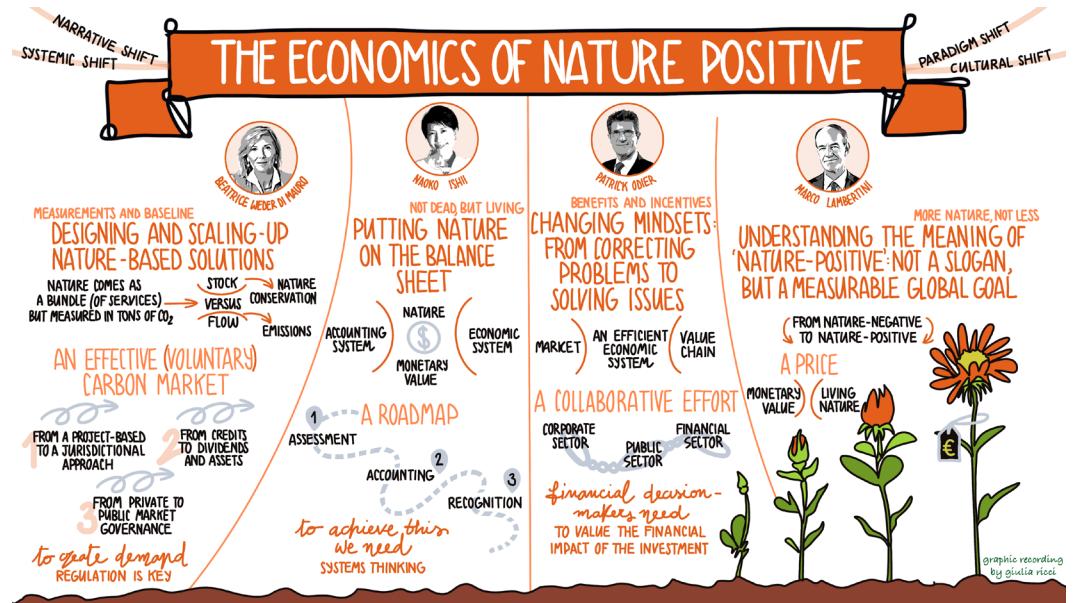


It's time to put nature on the balance sheet.

Naoko Ishii

Professor and Director, Centre for Global Commons, The University of Tokyo





Related Sessions

Turning Points for Nature: Nature on the Balance Sheet

Despite an increase of over 102 billion USD of private investment, a massive annual gap of 700 billion USD remains to properly restore nature.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Turning Points for Nature: Natural Capital

Biodiversity underpins over half of global GDP, approximately 44 trillion USD, by supporting essential ecosystem services such as food provision, water purification, and climate regulation, yet its assets are rarely accounted for on balance sheets and in investment decisions.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)



Opportunities for Collaboration on Nature Finance and Natural Capital

Key ideas include:

- putting nature on the balance sheet, considering it's tangible economic value when it is living, not only when it is dead.
- treating ecosystems and biodiversity as measurable, controllable assets that can be assessed for their financial value.
- formally integrating nature into financial disclosures and mainstream accounting rules.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

5. Preserving the Ocean and the Poles

The ocean and polar regions play a critical role in regulating Earth's climate by absorbing heat and carbon dioxide. Yet climate change is disrupting this balance—melting ice caps, altering ocean currents, and intensifying extreme weather—threatening the stability of ecosystems worldwide. *What can be done to avoid imminent climate tipping points?*

Key insights: our planet is mostly blue! Nature-positive technology and scientific exploration, together with global protection of the high seas and empowerment of local communities are vital to reversing some of the damage caused to the world's ocean...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

With:

- Tom Birbeck, Founder & CEO, ARC Marine; UpLink Innovator
- Kat Bruce, Founder, NatureMetrics
- Sylvia Earle, Marine Biologist and Oceanographer
- Keith Tuffley, Polar & Ocean Explorer; CEO, Race to Belém; Board Member, Villars Institute Foundation
- Moderator: Nik Gowing, Founder and Director, Thinking the Unthinkable



Creating a Community of Polar and Marine Experts

During the inaugural “Ground Zero for Planetary Tipping Points: Ocean & Poles” roundtable held the day before the Villars Summit 2025, some of the world’s leading polar and marine experts shared scientific findings, promising solutions and inspiring stories. The next edition will take place during the Villars Summit 2026.

2024 was the hottest year on record for the world’s ocean.

Warmer-than-average waters are bleaching much of the coral reefs, which provide a home for 25% of all marine species.

Global sea ice levels dropped to a record low in February 2025.

Two billion people depend on meltwater for food and water supply or hydropower.

Dissolved oxygen concentrations have declined by 2% in the ocean since 1960.

We rely on the ocean for half the oxygen we breathe.

We have just five years to ensure we ‘tip’ in the right direction. But it’s not too late.

We need to shift our mindsets.

We once hunted whales for oil, meat or money. Now we see them as carbon capture units. We can change.

Sylvia Earle, Marine Biologist and Oceanographer

We need to raise awareness.

For more than 150 years, we’ve been abusing the planet, but it’s been protecting us. It’s a reminder that we need to stay within planetary boundaries.

Johan Rockström, Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

We need compelling stories, that inspire solutions and actions.

Science gives us facts, not solutions. For solutions, we need stories people can engage with.

Keith Tuffley, Polar and Ocean Explorer; CEO, Race to Belém



Opportunities for Collaboration on Ocean Protection

Key ideas include:

- put the ocean on the balance sheet, integrating its value into corporate and national accounting, through data-driven assessments and shared accounting frameworks.
- launch a campaign to collect one billion signatures to close the high seas to all forms of exploitation.
- shift funding from pure philanthropy to responsible business that takes into account the impact/externalities on coastal communities.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

6. Responding with Systemic Approaches and Innovation Pathways

The Nexus Assessment of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) highlights that the global economy is losing up to 25 trillion USD annually due to agriculture, energy, and fisheries sectors failing to account for their impacts on biodiversity loss, climate change, food security, water scarcity, and public health. *What are the most effective strategies for driving coordinated action?*

Key insights: the interconnected challenges facing our planet—and the wide-ranging externalities of our actions—require us to move from nexus assessments to actionable response strategies, and ultimately to nexus governance...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

With:

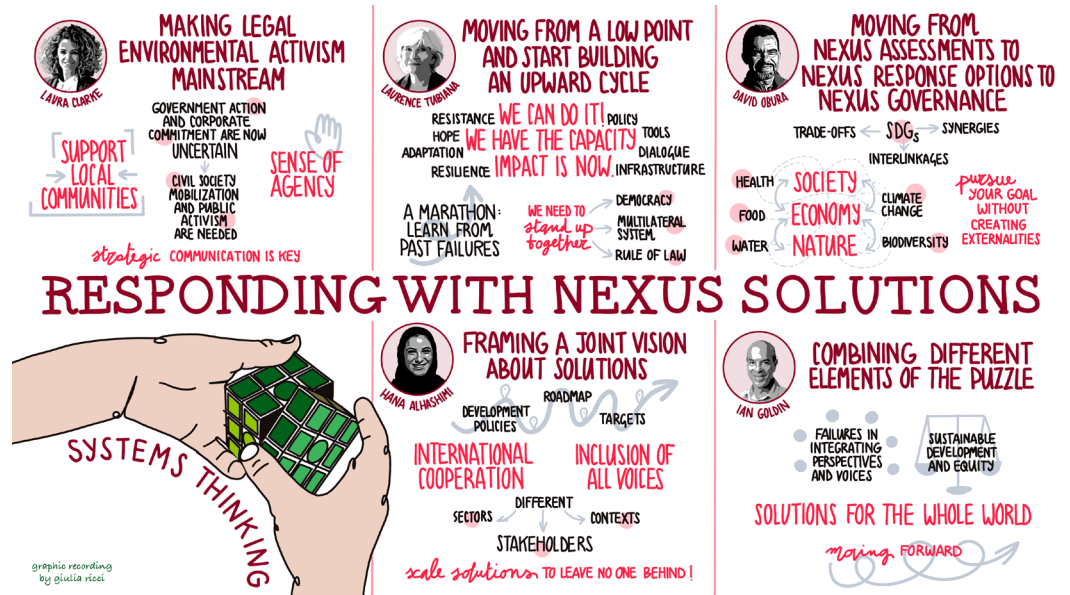
- Laura Clarke, CEO, ClientEarth
- Hana Al Hashimi, Board Member, Rashid and Latifa Schools Establishment; UAE Chief Climate Negotiator
- David Obura, Founding Director, CORDIO East Africa and Chair, IPBES
- Laurence Tubiana, CEO, European Climate Foundation
- Moderator: Ian Goldin, Professor of Globalisation and Development, University of Oxford

“My message to the youth of today? You’re active, engaged and protesting, but we - the older generations - aren’t giving you the tools you need to change society.”

Laurence Tubiana

CEO, European Climate Foundation





Related Sessions

Turning Points for Nature: Accelerating Breakthrough Innovation

The Earthshot Prize searches globally for game-changing innovations that will help us repair our planet. Moreover, the Frontiers Planet Prize celebrates breakthroughs in sustainability science to keep the planet within its 9 planetary boundaries.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Turning Points for Nature: AI & Learning

AI can improve learning about sustainability by personalizing educational content, analyzing real-world environmental data, and enhancing engagement through interactive simulations.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

The following related sessions focus on innovation pathways to develop, scale, and adopt projects, policies, or practices to accelerate systemic change:

Innovation Pathways to Nature-Based Solutions

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Innovation Pathways to Net Zero Emissions

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Innovation Pathways to Food Security

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

Innovation Pathways to Nature Restoration

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)



7. Harnessing the Power of Narrative and Systems Leadership

Two powerful themes emerged from this year's Villars Summit, which connected all the sessions across the three days: (1) the need for more engaging and effective storytelling and (2) a call for systems thinking and systems leadership.

Reinforcing the Villars Institute's message to THINK, FEEL and ACT.

Telling the Story of Biodiversity

Conventional storytelling is not helping people understand the magnitude of climate change and biodiversity crises.

How can we create new narratives that change mindsets and inspire action?

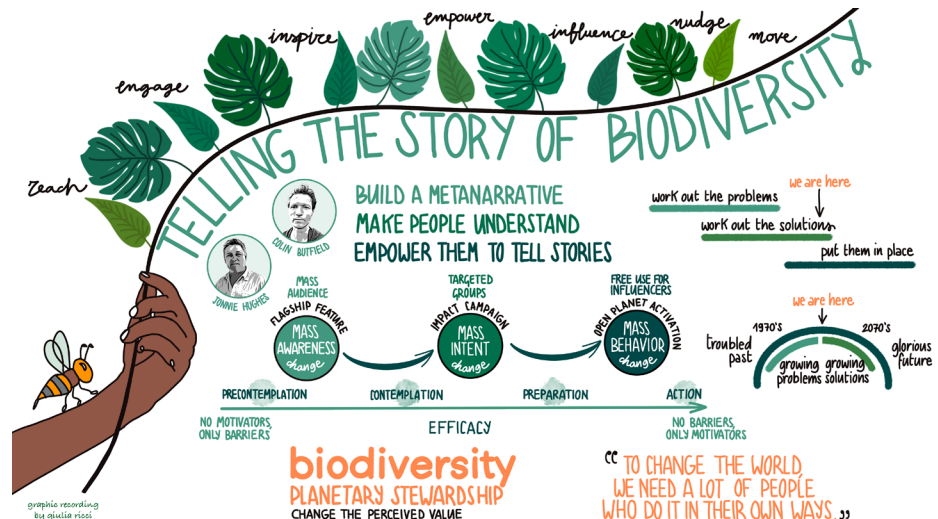
With:

- Colin Butfield, Co-Founder & Director, Open Planet Studios
- Jonnie Hughes, Co-Founder & Director, Open Planet Studios

Key insights: enabling the content creator economy to create - and share - their own stories about climate crisis and biodiversity in their own voices will help amplify vital messages about these issues...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)





Related Sessions

Opportunities for Collaboration on a Narrative for Nature Restoration

Key ideas include:

- emotions are much more powerful than facts in engaging people.
- communication efficacy is not just based on what is said, but on who is saying it.
- in an era of information overload, we need to meet the audience where they are, tailoring our narrative and language.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

“We need mass audiences to understand what’s happening to biodiversity so politicians and business-leaders take note.”

Jonnie Hughes

Co-Founder & Director, Open Planet Studios

Memories of the Melted – A Journey through Time

In honor of this International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation, artist Thijs Biersteker and violinist SongHa ([Robert Dunand Prize Winner 2024](#)) showcased the power of storytelling by fusing glacier data with musical expression and a real-time responsive art piece, immersing participants in four scenarios—past and future—of the Rhône Glacier.

“It’s time to turn complexity of science into a compelling worldview.”

Thijs Biersteker

Artist and Founder, Woven Foundation

[Watch the video here.](#)



Cultivating Systems Leadership for Nature

Upon attempting to restore nature, we face significant leadership challenges, as ecosystem restoration at scale requires unprecedented collaboration across various sectors and stakeholders in a highly complex system.

How can we accelerate systems leadership to improve planetary health?

Key insights: come up with solutions, not problems; be a connector, not a networker; navigate “grey” areas, not “black and white” ones...

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

With:

- Grethel Aguilar, Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Kirsten Schuijt, Director General, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)
- Kristian Teleki, CEO, Fauna & Flora
- Martin Harper, CEO, Birdlife International
- Moderator: Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Chair, Villars Institute



Being the director general of WWF requires you to think in systems. Show solidarity, be comfortable navigating the grey, and always have thick skin and a big smile.

Kirsten Schuijt

Director General, WWF

The 5th Villars Institute Distinguished Lecture

Magdalena Skipper, Editor-in-Chief of UK science journal *Nature* and Chief Editorial Adviser for *Nature Portfolio*, delivered the 5th Villars Distinguished Lecture, focused on the role collaboration plays in building a healthy research ecosystem.

[Read the full Rapporteur Report here.](#)

“Scientists are the most trusted profession. We should tap into this trust in how we communicate science.

Magdalena Skipper
Editor-in-Chief, Nature



“Narratives have a sense of agency: the ending is not yet determined. But we can shape that outcome in many ways.

Lee Howell
Executive Director, Villars Institute

