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Far away, Japan, Norway and Iceland are still killing whales, sharks are having their fins cut off to make soup, elephants are being machine-gunned for ivory ornaments, tiger and rhino numbers plummet towards extinction for health potions, leopard and lion hunting is booming and the Maltese continue to shoot migrating birds.

At home, successive Governments' farming policies have ecologically sterilised swathes of countryside, while our current Government is culling badgers in exchange for farmers' votes. At the other end of the social spectrum, the British aristocracy still shoots grouse at the expense of hen harriers and natural upland ecosystems.

In support of profit, politics and pleasure, persuasive advocates plead necessity to boost ailing economies, conserve cultural heritage or for "scientific research". In a bygone age, with a wealth of resources and limited understanding, they might have had half a point, but not anymore. Now we are resource-poor and knowledge-rich, the same old justifications are no longer credible.

Against this relentless onslaught "what's the point?" is a good question. But is it as hopeless as it seems? At sea, marine success stories such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary boast teeming life after decades of protection. Sadly, no such vision in the UK, although there is an unexpected bonus from offshore wind farms preventing fishing and creating mini marine reserves.

On land, the prospects are better, with enlightened farmers now dedicating land to ecological enhancement. In support, the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and RSPB are bringing land back into sustainable management. These remnant habitat fragments will seed the ecological renaissance required for a healthy future.

In the rush for modernisation, we have become too remote from the natural environment. Nature matters and people need to reconnect with it if our prospects are to improve.

