

Nature-Related Conversation in 2020-2021



Intro & Methodology

Scope:

This report explores the broader conversation on nature before, after, and during the COVID-19 pandemic globally on Twitter.

The aim of this report is to:

- ▶ Understand how the conversation around nature and related conversations has evolved over 2020 and in the before and after of COVID.
- ▶ Understand the importance and the timeline of the Twitter conversation on nature as a whole, as well as nature-based climate solutions, biodiversity, and green recovery policies
- ▶ Analyse the nature and longevity of negative nature stories, such as natural disasters, as well as their correlation with climate change
- ▶ Examine the correlation between nature, COVID, and the economic rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic

Time Period:

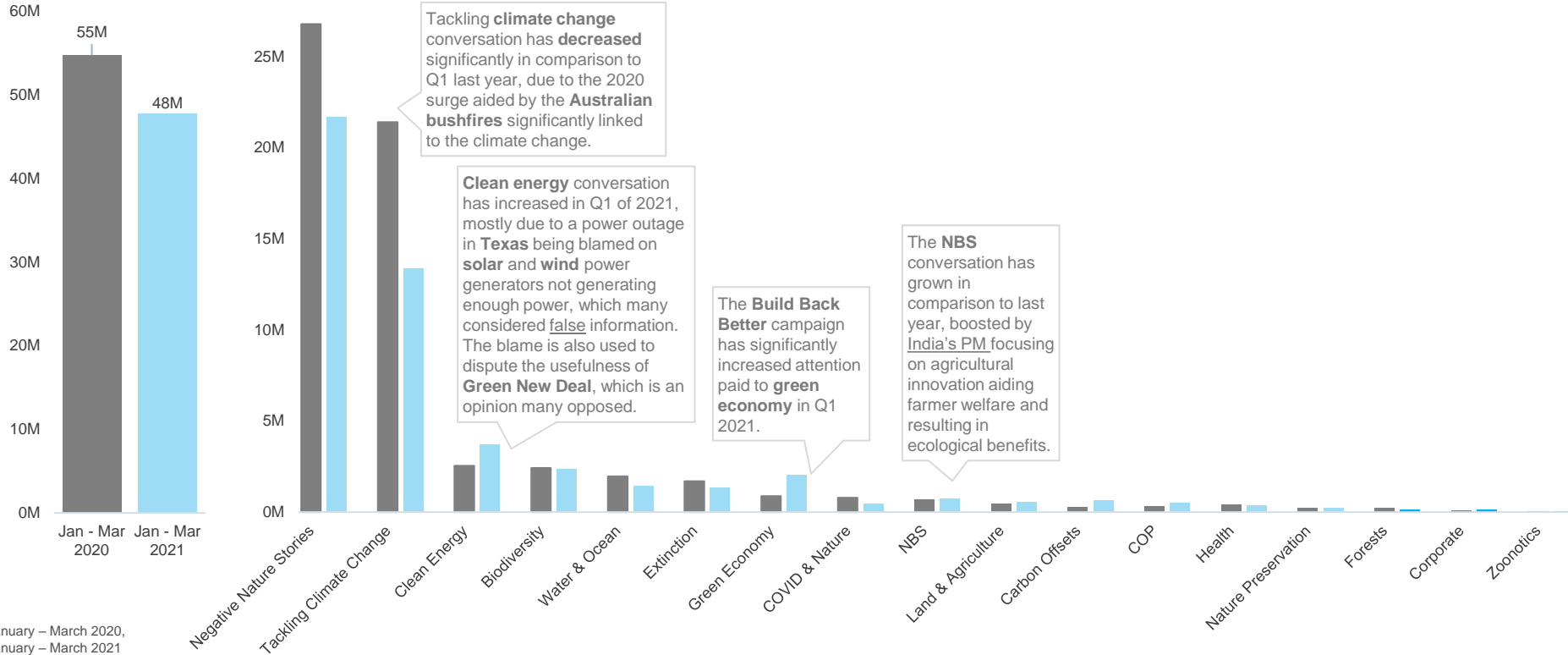
January 2020 – March 2021

All Analysis in Global English

- ▶ The nature conversation has **decreased** slightly in Q1 of 2021 in comparison to Q1 of 2020, mainly due to a decrease in conversation on such negative nature stories as the Australian bushfires in the beginning of 2020. However, the conversation on **nature-based climate** solutions has **increased** slightly, aided by **international** interest in agricultural innovation. Conversations on **clean energy, green economy, carbon offsets, COP** and **corporate climate commitments** have all also grown in popularity. Focus on these topics to align with the wider audience's current topical interests.
- ▶ Most of the **negative nature stories do not sustain momentum** and are **not linked with climate change**, with a rare **exception** of **wildfires** and **bushfires** in California and Australia, with both natural disasters maintaining momentum on Twitter and garnering a more significant association with climate change.
- ▶ **COVID** and **nature** conversations are most often discussed **parallel** to each other. Negative nature stories are discussed as something the world has to deal with “on top of” the problems with COVID. Government inefficiency and international relations are most often cited as the origin and spread of COVID, not nature. However, when nature is discussed as a cause of COVID, it is often discussed in terms of **animal origin**, with little conversation devoted to the deforestation and destruction of the natural animal habitat as a cause.
- ▶ Only **2%** of the post-COVID **economic recovery** Twitter conversation involves **nature**. **Green recovery** conversation took off in June, and continues to be prominent as an **international** topic, also widely discussed in India and Pakistan. **Green growth** conversation saw an uptick in January of this year, but is a considerably smaller conversation than green recovery, with activists pointing out not enough is being done to fulfil the green growth promised made by the government.
- ▶ Political figures and activists are the most prominent groups of influential voices on the topic of nature over the last year, often focusing on “who is to blame/who is responsible” narrative. Messaging of accountability is a prominent theme across the conversation by the most influential voices.

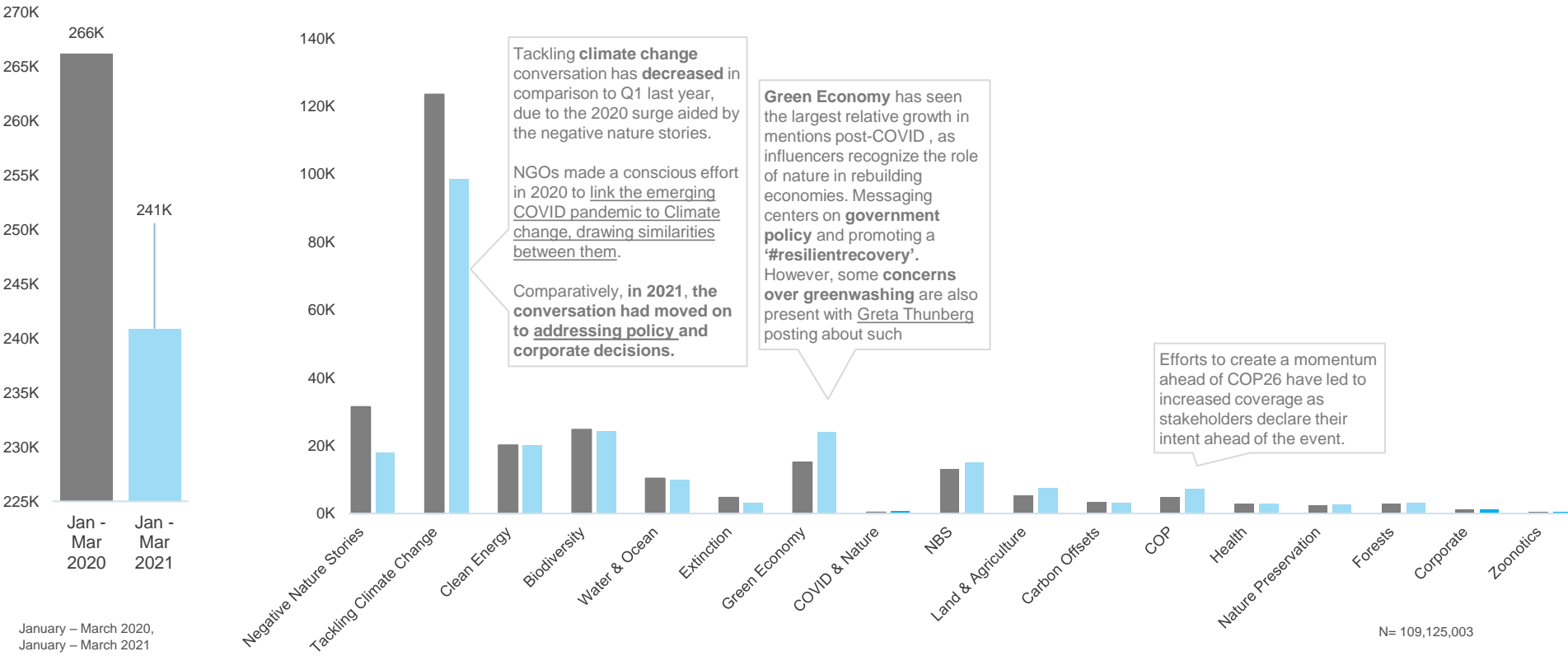
Nature Conversation: 2020 v 2021

While the overall volume of nature conversation in Q1 2021 decreased by **16%** in comparison to Q1 of 2020, such conversations as clean energy, green economy, land & agriculture, carbon offsets, COP, corporate climate commitments, and nature-based solutions grew in 2021. Green economy conversation had the most prominent growth in 2021, most prominently due to Joe Biden’s presidential “build back better” campaign focusing on creation of 10 million clean-energy jobs.



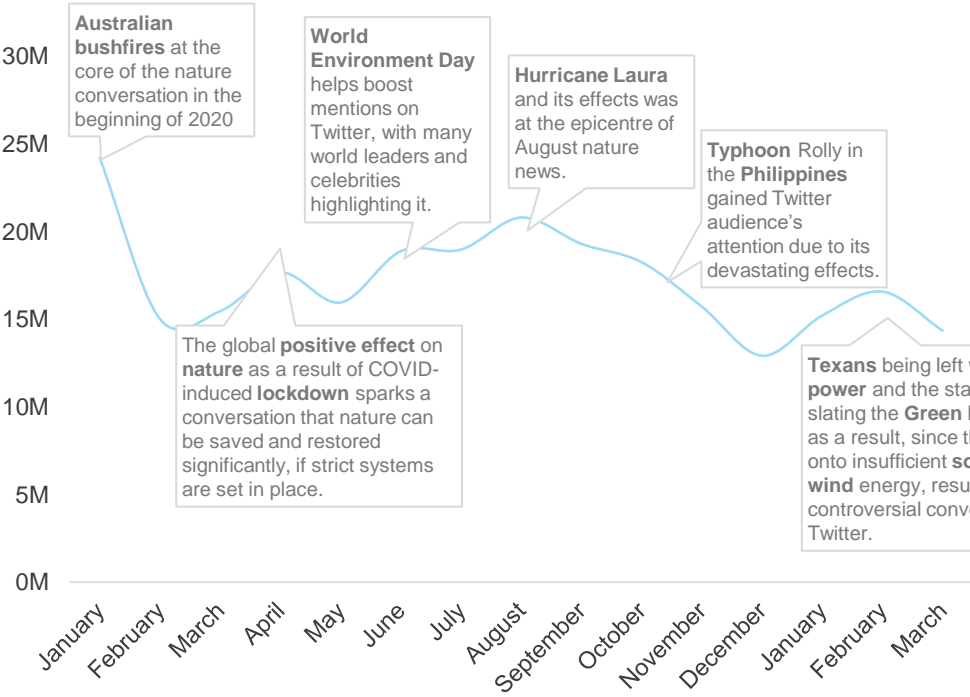
Nature Conversation: Q1 2020 v Q2 2021

While the overall volume of nature conversation in Q1 2021 decreased by **9%** in comparison to Q1 of 2020, the influencer topical conversations sees lesser fluctuation to Twitter on a whole. Due to the changes over the past year, the Green economy conversation sees the greatest uplift, primarily due to recovery conversations focusing on the importance of factoring in environmental solutions.



Nature conversation timeline

Overall, the nature conversation over the last 15 months has decreased, when comparing Q1 2020 to Q1 2021. There is an overarching messaging of “I will believe it when I see it” when it comes to the importance of nature. Large-scale effects on nature, such as the **Australian bushfires** or **hurricane Laura** gain most attention, but typically don’t sustain momentum. While negative nature stories gain the most attention, the positive effects the lockdown has had on nature were also highlighted in April 2020. Outside of large-scale stories, global events such as the World Environment Day gain attention, especially boosted by the influencer attention.



Australian bushfires at the core of the nature conversation in the beginning of 2020

World Environment Day helps boost mentions on Twitter, with many world leaders and celebrities highlighting it.

Hurricane Laura and its effects was at the epicentre of August nature news.

Typhoon Rolly in the **Philippines** gained Twitter audience's attention due to its devastating effects.

The global **positive effect on nature** as a result of **COVID-induced lockdown** sparks a conversation that nature can be saved and restored significantly, if strict systems are set in place.

Texans being left without **power** and the state governor slating the **Green New Deal** as a result, since the blame fell onto insufficient **solar** and **wind** energy, resulted in a controversial conversation on Twitter.

Francis Maxwell @francismaxwell
A church catches fire and the entire world stops, news is everywhere and billions are raised overnight. But when our planet catches fire, there's crickets. This fire in Australia has killed HALF A BILLION ANIMALS. Half a billion. This needs to be trending everywh...

Jim Loves Movies @goodoldscatchy · Jan 2, 2020
Let's talk about what's happening in Australia, which is suffering in recorded history.
This almost unimaginable catastrophe has killed half a billion released over 250 million tonnes of CO2 so far.
#AustraliaBurning
pic.twitter.com/MAMlFcpa1
Show this thread
6:26 PM · Jan 2, 2020 · Twitter Web App
365.3K Retweets 4,740 Quote Tweets 525.2K Likes

nakakiemis @kakiemp83
that's what happens when u shut down the biggest national network 🤡

ABS-CBN News Channel @ANCALERTS · Oct 30, 2020
USEC Jalad appeals to the media to spread word about the strength and risk of Typhoon Rolly to as many communities as possible, because he says many farflung communities only have the radio as a source of information. | via @charazambano #RollyPH
Show this thread
6:15 AM · Oct 31, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone
2,861 Retweets 86 Quote Tweets 11.4K Likes

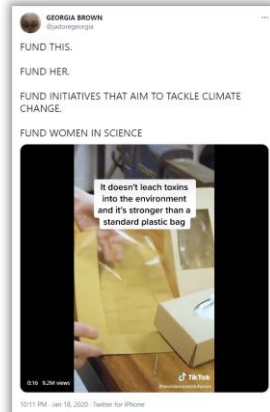
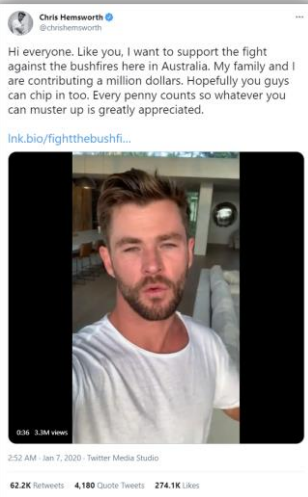
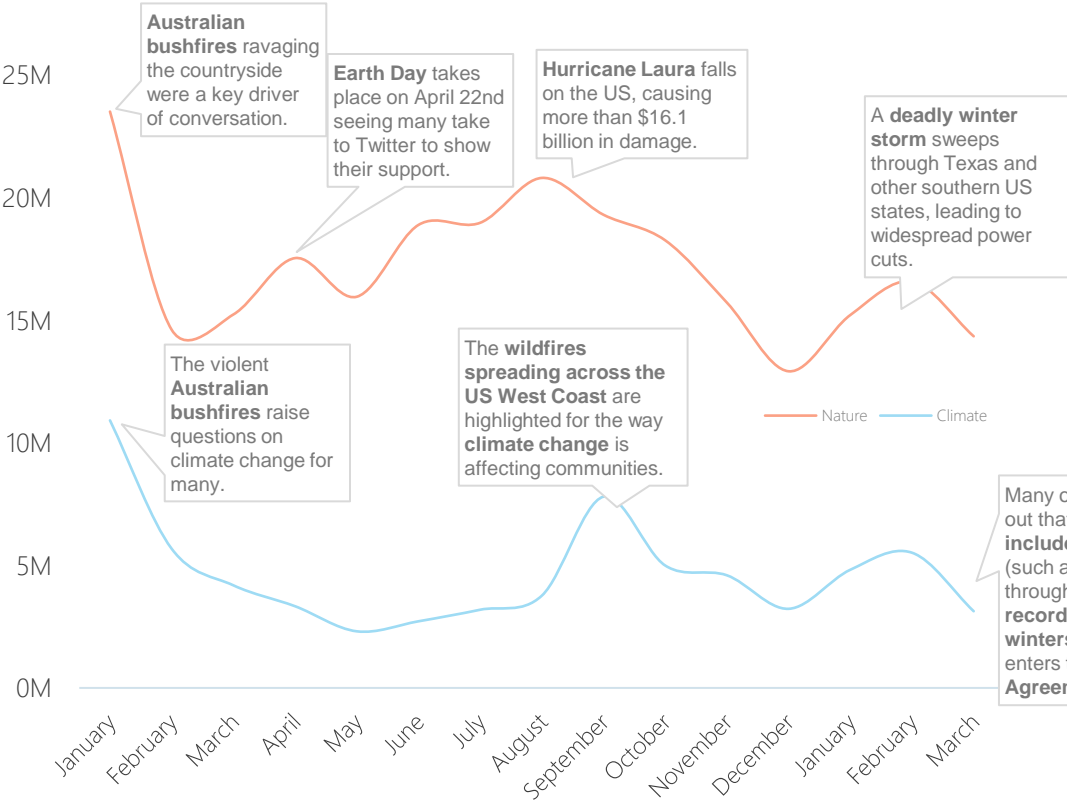
Kyle Griffin @kylegriffin1
The House Oversight subcommittee on the Environment is investigating the operator of Texas' power grid for its role in leaving millions without electricity during the destructive winter storm requesting information and doc... lack of preparation.
5:30 PM · Mar 3, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone
582 Retweets 23 Quote Tweets 3,458 Likes

Mufti Menk @muftimenk
Every part of the world is infected by the virus and indeed the aura of terror has spread far and wide. But amid all the doom and gloom, there's indeed a sliver lining. Nature is slowly recovering from pollution, families are spending more time together. We will get through this!
11:10 AM · Apr 9, 2020 · Twitter for Android
7,247 Retweets 163 Quote Tweets 25.4K Likes

N= 259,434,325

Nature v Climate conversation

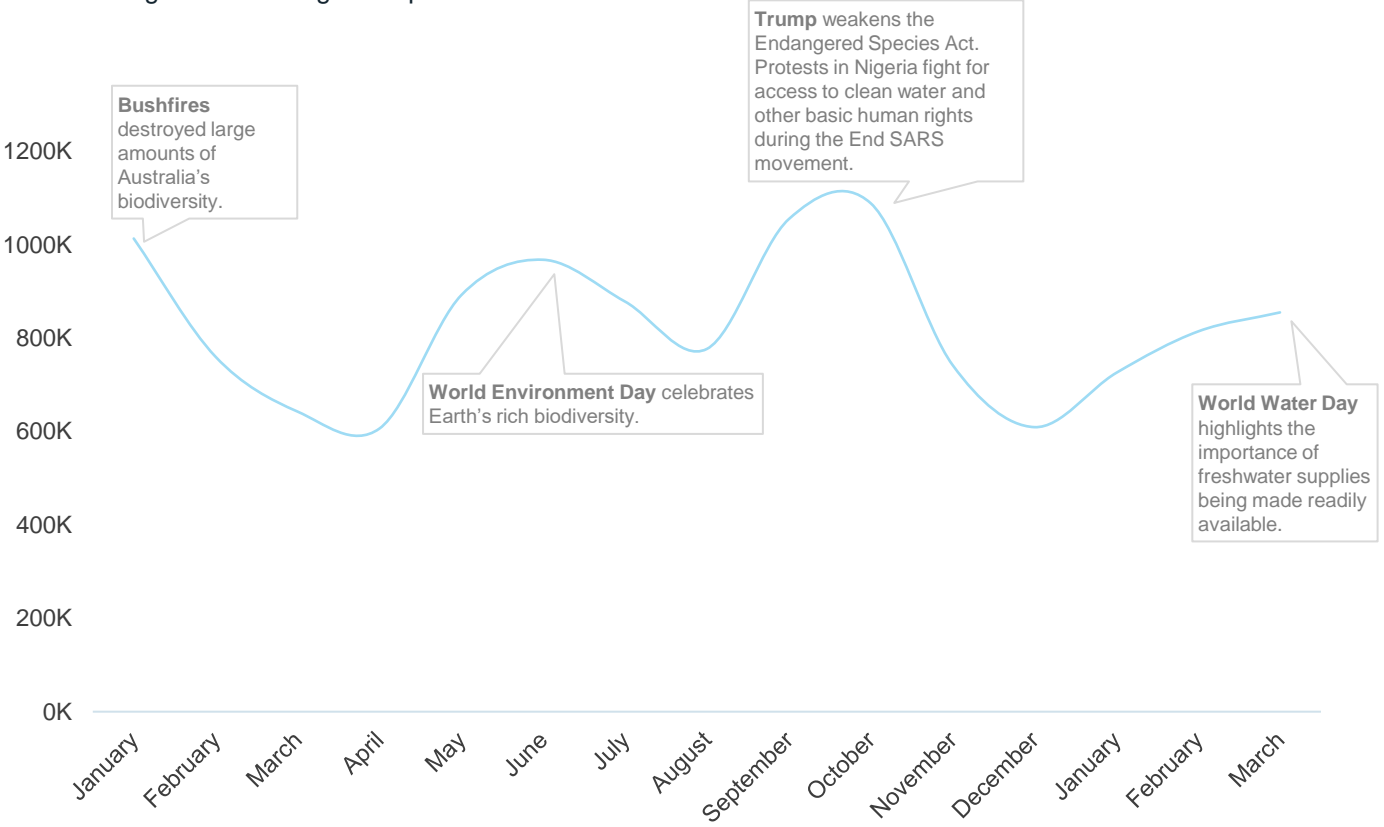
Both the nature and climate change conversations correlated somewhat in January 2020 due to the raging **bushfires in Australia**. We see both conversations drop off in February, but then see them take different paths: from February through August the climate conversation plateaus, hovering around the mark of 3-4 million mentions, whereas the nature conversation continues an upward trend, with peaks around events such as **Earth Day** and **Hurricane Laura**, which is not explicitly linked with climate. The climate conversation peaks again in September with the commencement of **wildfires spreading through the US West Coast**. From here on the correlation between the 2 conversations picks back up through to March.



Many on Twitter point out that **climate change includes winter storms** (such as those passing through Texas) and **record-breaking winters**. Also, the US re-enters the **Paris Climate Agreement**.

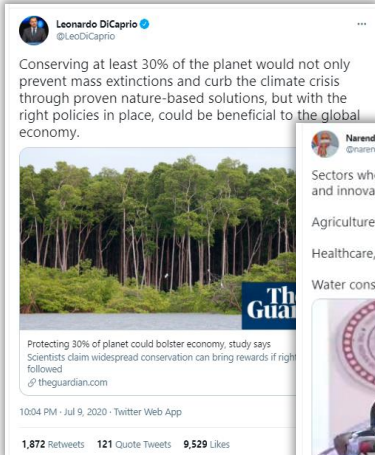
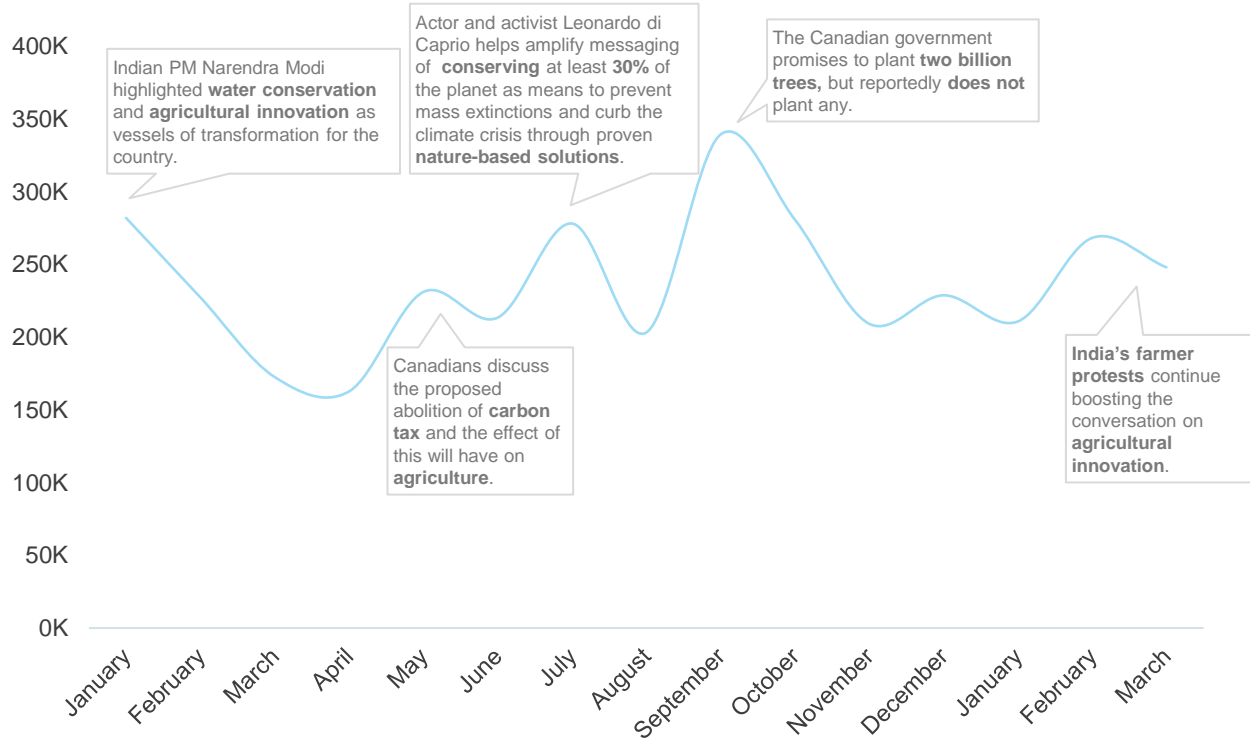
Biodiversity timeline

The damage bush fires caused to Australia's biodiversity was a large driver of biodiversity conversation at the start of 2020. There were steep spikes in biodiversity mentions in June and October 2020, and to a lesser extent March 2021, were driven by world awareness days or social movements. Towards the end of 2020, Biden's pledge to protect biodiversity was shared and responded to favourably on Twitter, in contrast to his election opponent Trump's weakening of the Endangered Species act.

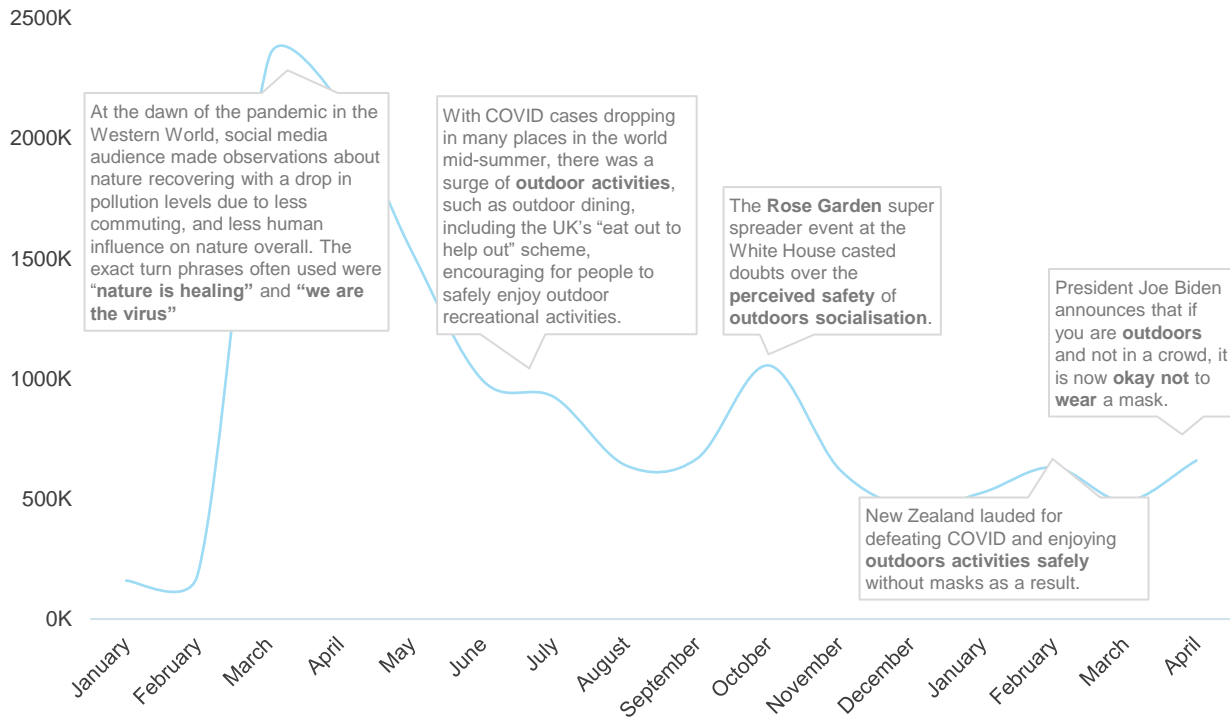


Nature Based Solutions Timeline

When comparing the conversation on nature-based solutions in Q1 of 2021 to Q1 of 2020, it has grown, aided by India's PM continuous focus on agricultural innovation and its ecological benefits. However, this story has a strong negative aspect, with many arguing that the agricultural reforms proposed by the prime minister are harmful to farmers' welfare. On the other side of the world in North America, nature-based solutions are mostly mentioned in a positive light, but remain somewhat controversial, e.g., with many opposing carbon tax in Canada.



The biggest spike in nature and outdoors conversation in relation to the pandemic happened at the very beginning of the spread of the virus in the Western World, in March 2020. Smaller spikes occurred throughout the year. The conversation developed from the nature benefiting from the absence of humans to outdoor activities as the best way to spend time during the pandemic, to there still being risks to outdoors mid-pandemic activities, and, most recently, to individual countries and economies fighting the pandemic in order to eradicate the risk of the infection outdoors, making it a safe way to enjoy the nature, while the rest of the economy is still recovering.



At the dawn of the pandemic in the Western World, social media audience made observations about nature recovering with a drop in pollution levels due to less commuting, and less human influence on nature overall. The exact turn phrases often used were “nature is healing” and “we are the virus”

With COVID cases dropping in many places in the world mid-summer, there was a surge of **outdoor activities**, such as outdoor dining, including the UK’s “eat out to help out” scheme, encouraging for people to safely enjoy outdoor recreational activities.

The **Rose Garden** super spreader event at the White House casted doubts over the **perceived safety of outdoors socialisation**.

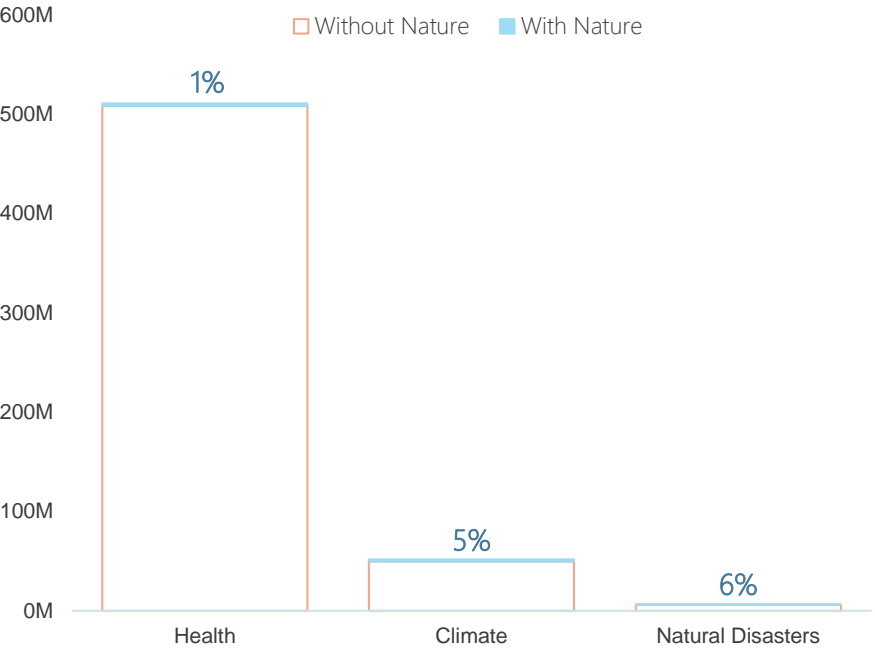
President Joe Biden announces that if you are **outdoors** and not in a crowd, it is now **okay not to wear a mask**.

New Zealand lauded for defeating COVID and enjoying **outdoors activities safely** without masks as a result.

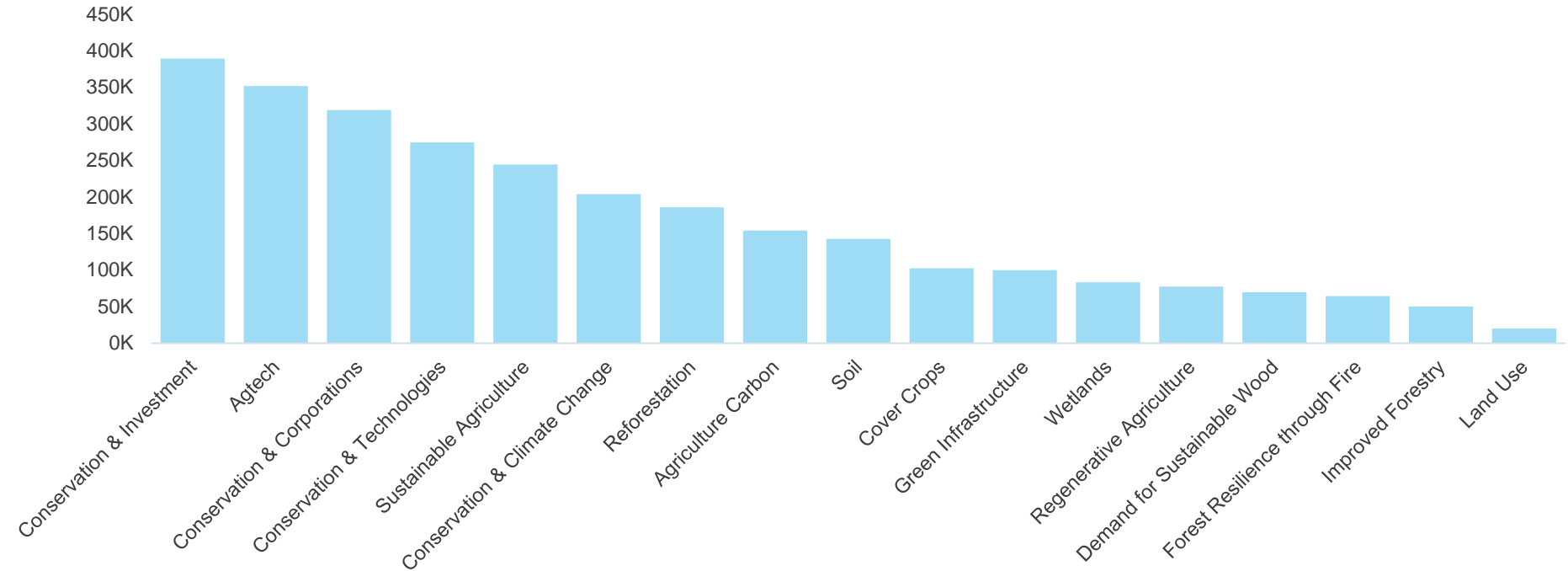


Nature during the pandemic: The wider picture

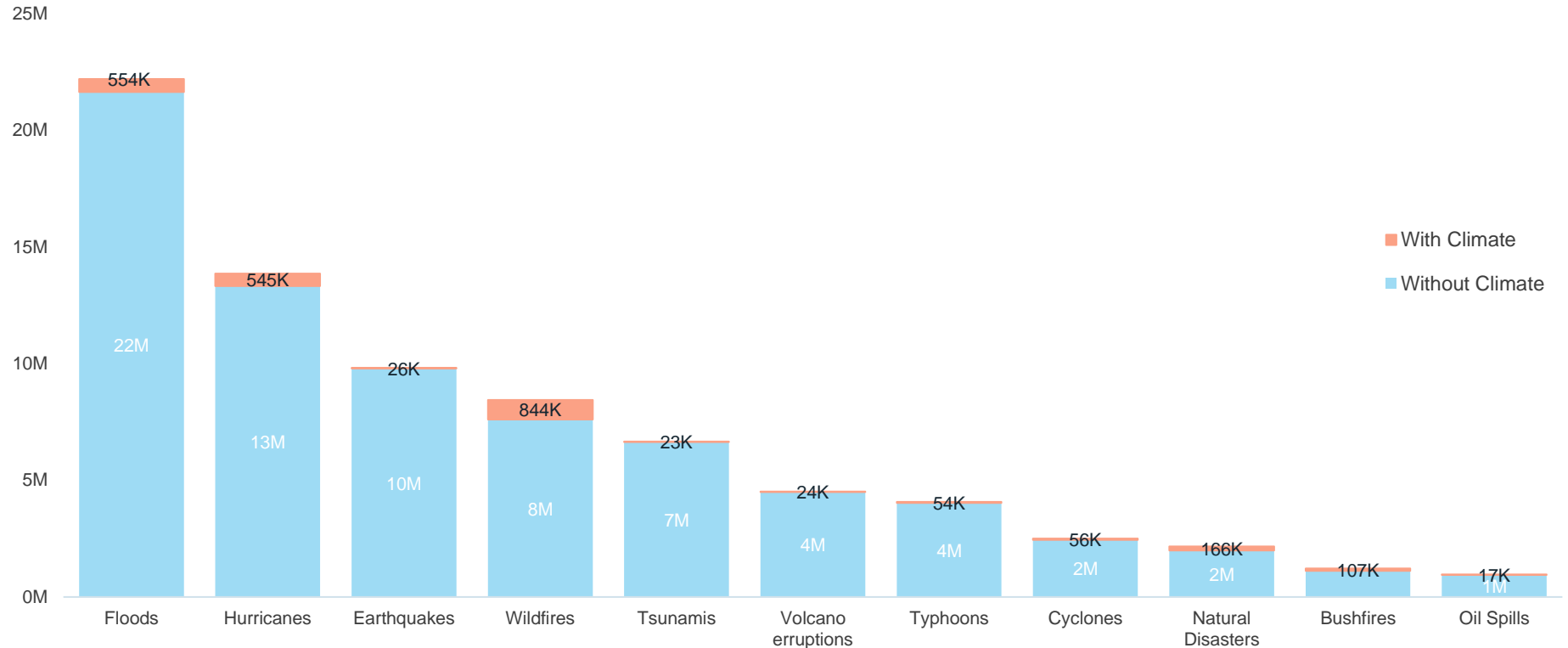
Expectedly, health conversation was centre-stage last year, with climate and natural disasters only gaining a fraction of the attention. Nature and outdoors conversation is rarely mentioned in these conversations. However, when the health and nature conversations coincide, there is emphasis is on **choosing outdoors** instead of indoors for social activities as a prevention measure in the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the climate conversation overlapping with the nature conversation, the most engaged content focused on **nature** and **outdoors** being **separate** from **climate**. In the natural disaster conversation, when nature is mentioned, rebuilding nature, e.g., through planting trees, is shown as one way to recover from the natural disasters.



Top nature-based solution conversations often had a political undertone, with country leaders (e.g., Canada, USA) using investment into nature-based climate solutions to gain a more positive disposition towards their policies. Agricultural technology and conservation investment are the most discussed topics within the nature-based solutions conversation, aided by the overall interest of using technology to improve farming and food innovation, and many on Twitter disputing former president Trump's claims that his administration has achieved a lot in terms of conservation, which many felt was solely to serve the purpose of his presidential campaign propaganda.



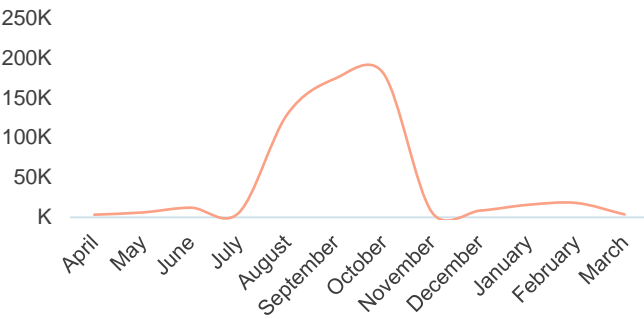
On **average**, only **4%** of the natural disaster content is linked to climate. The highest proportion of natural disaster conversation that was associated with climate was that on **wildfires**, with **11%** and by **bushfires** with **10%**. Less than 1% of earthquake and tsunami content related to climate.



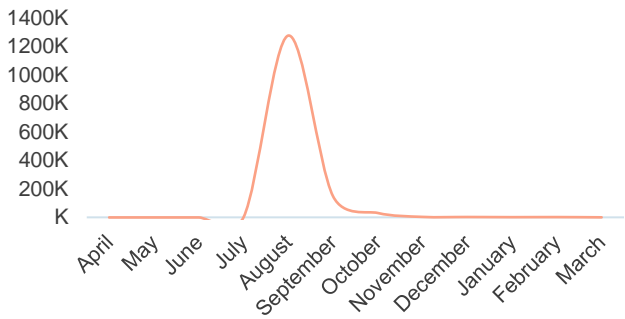
Negative climate stories

Looking at the top six negative climate stories over the last year, it becomes evident that most conversations die down completely within weeks. However, both Californian and Australian wildfires have managed to maintain some momentum. Increasingly, bushfires are becoming a part of the wider Australian identity, while the Californian wildfire narrative persists through government aid, such as tax benefits for wildfire victims.

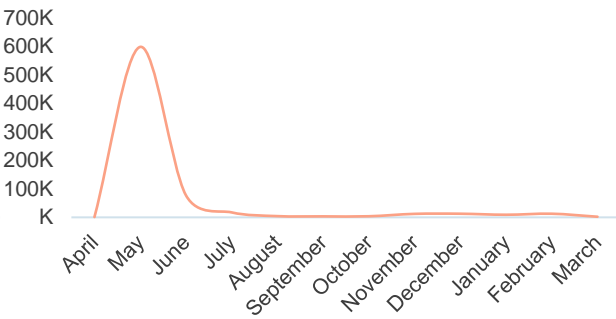
California wildfires



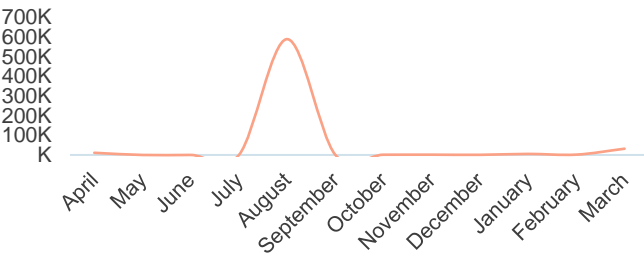
Hurricane Laura



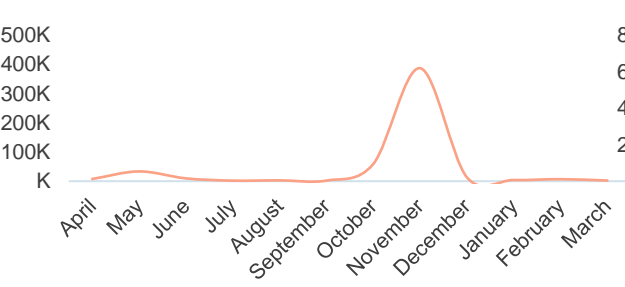
Cyclone Amphan



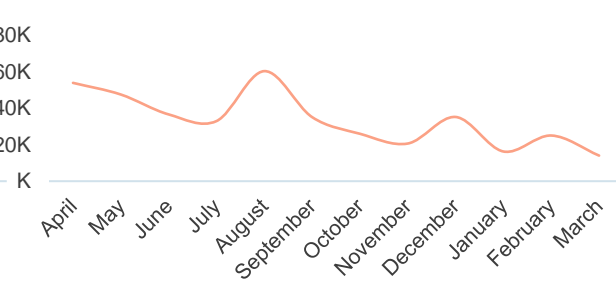
Mount Sinabung Volcano



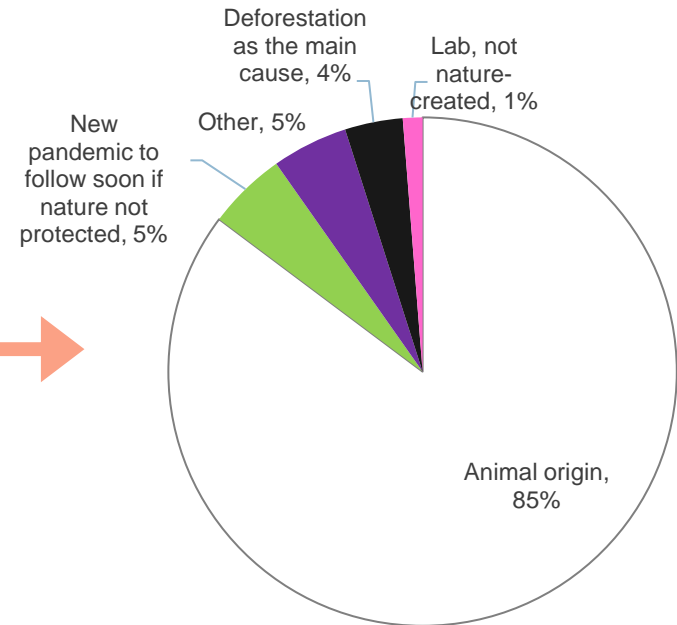
Philippines Typhoon



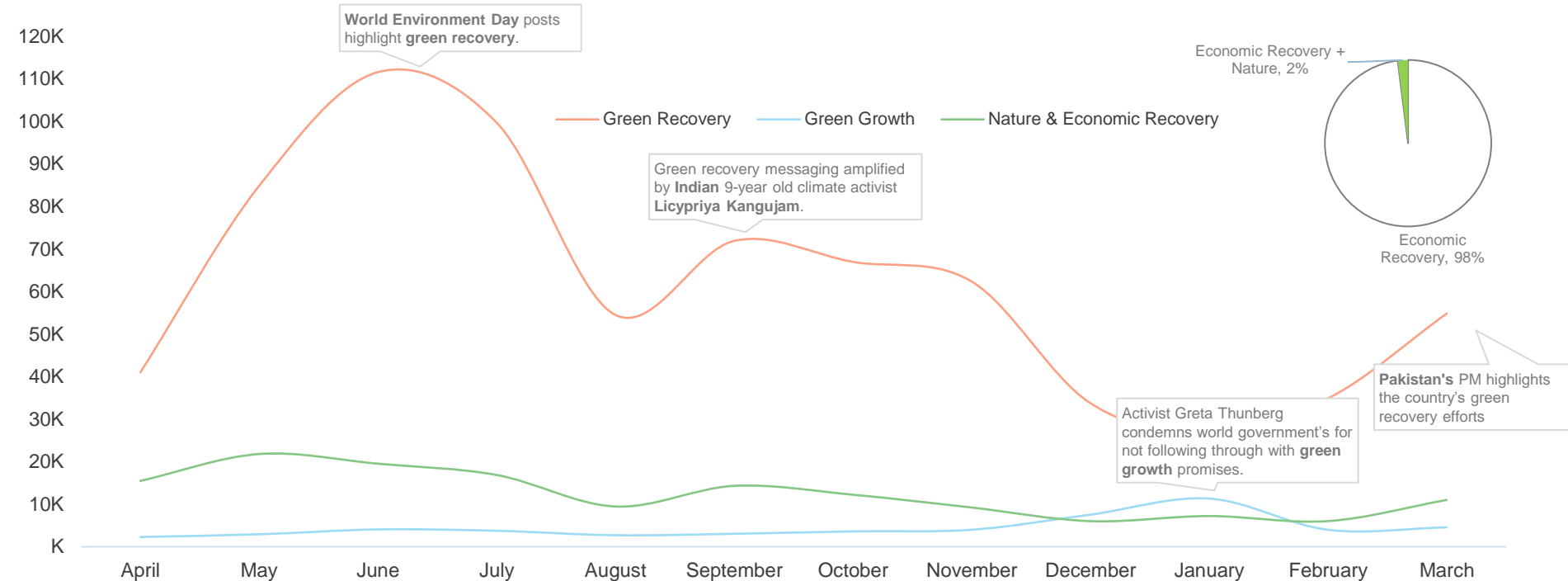
Australian bushfires



COVID and nature conversations are most often discussed parallel to each other, as opposed to cause & effect. Negative nature and climate stories are discussed as something the world has to deal with “on top of” the problems with COVID. Government inefficiency and international relations are most often “blame” for the origin and spread of COVID, not nature. However, when nature is discussed as a cause of COVID, it is often discussed in terms of animal origin, e.g., “it came from a bat”, but very little conversation is devoted to the nature problems leading to this, such as deforestation and destruction of the natural animal habitat.



Only **2%** of the post-COVID economic recovery Twitter conversation involves nature. **Green recovery** conversation took off in June, with the World Environment Day amplifying the messaging. While this conversation has lost some of its momentum, the overall conversation persists as an international topic, also widely discussed in India and Pakistan. **Green growth** conversation saw an uptick in January of this year, with Greta Thunberg as a facilitator of the conversation on the world's governments not doing enough to back out their promises on green growth ambitions.



The two most influential groups of voices on the topic of nature were political professionals and nature and climate activists, often gathering the most attention when opposing another authority and advocating clean and renewable energy.

Academics



Robert Reich

Economist Robert Reich was one of the most influential voices calling out the Texas governor for blaming the power outage on the Green New Deal, when the deal has not yet been implemented, and over 80% of the Texas power is from non-renewable sources. He also highlighted such issues as incarcerated firefighters being a large force dealing with Californian wildfires, while being severely underpaid.

1.3M followers

Political Figures



Beto O'Rourke

Beto was another voice condemning the Texas governor for trying to blame the Green New Deal for the power outages in Texas. However, Beto has also called out other politicians, e.g. for putting clean energy jobs on the back burner. Overall, clean energy in Texas has been a key campaign point for this politician, reaching a large audience.

2 M followers

Activists



Licypriya Kangujam

The 9-year old climate activist from India highlighted many nature and climate issues within the last year, calling out both the Indian and international government representatives on not taking enough initiative in negative nature stories, such as floods, typhoons, and wildfires.

128.8K followers

Entrepreneurs



Elon Musk

The entrepreneurs grandiose Carbon Removal challenge was most notably picked up by the Twitter audience. Throughout the year in his Twitter activity the businessman has emphasized his commitments to sustainable energy, making his voice influential through his large social media following.

50.1M followers



Narendra Modi

PM of India has spread the messaging on the need for an agricultural technology reform in the country, which he has said should lead to improved ecological and economic results. However, his statements have often been met with backlash, as many in India believe the measures the PM is taking are hurting the welfare of Indian farmers.

66.7M followers



Mari Copeny

Aged 13, founder of Dear Flint Kids Mari is highlighting the fact that it has been six years since the Flint water crisis, but nobody has been charged for the misdoings.

138.8K followers



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

The representative was actively advocating the Green New Deal proposal from the public housing perspective, as well as emphasizing the importance and priority of clean and renewable energy.

12.6 M followers