



BIRDGIRL'S HOPE FOR NATURE AT COP16



Dr Mya-Rose Craig

Use this QR code to watch our short film with Birdgirl about the right young people have to protest about the climate crisis. It should be scanned by a responsible adult.



DR Mya-Rose Craig, also known as Birdgirl, is a birdwatcher and an environmental campaigner who is attending COP16. Here is what she says about nature...

From 21 October to 1 November, something important will be happening in Cali, Colombia. It's the United Nations Biodiversity Convention, or COP16. It brings together almost every country in the world, working together to stop the loss of nature – or biodiversity – and I feel really fortunate that I'll be attending it.

I'm looking forward to hearing from countries around the world, and of course the UK, about what they are doing to halt and reverse the loss of nature by 2030, as promised at the previous nature summit, COP15, in 2022.

Leading by example

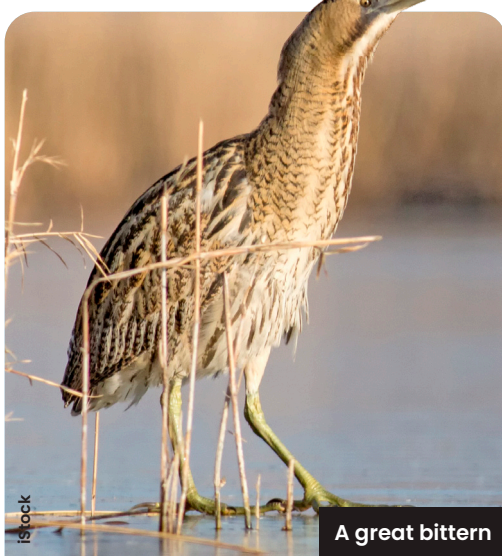
I really believe that the new UK government must show leadership on the world stage. All four countries of the United Kingdom are shockingly some of the most nature-depleted in the world, so we must lead by example and ensure that promises are turned into actions, and that our generation, and generations to come, live within a healthy, flourishing natural world.

While in Cali, I'll be supporting the RSPB (the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), who will be there to make sure that COP16 gets the vital change that is needed both for nature and people. The RSPB has brilliantly demonstrated how to bring back nature from the brink, and it's really

crucial to prove to world leaders that it's not too late to make a difference.

The boom of the bittern

Take one example, booming bitterns! You might not ever have seen a bittern, but you may have heard one. A



A great bittern

member of the heron family, bitterns are elusive birds, often hiding in reedbeds. They are actually the loudest bird in the UK! The males make a booming sound in spring that can be heard up to three miles away, helping them establish their territory and attract female mates during the breeding season. In 1997, there were just 11 males in the UK but, thanks to the RSPB's efforts, there are now 234 male bitterns booming, with reedbeds restored and habitats created to help bitterns thrive, including at the RSPB's Leighton Moss reserve.

New wildlife haven

If you live in London, or have visited recently, you may have travelled on the new Elizabeth line. But I bet

you didn't know that three million tonnes of soil that were excavated during the construction of tunnels were taken by ship to RSPB Wallasea Island, in Essex. The newly created saltmarsh, mudflats and lagoons are a wildlife haven, with more than 38,000 waterbirds recorded there last December. It's an amazing example of how to become 'nature positive' – one of the big targets for countries to ensure there is more nature in the world by 2030.

There may only be five years left to meet the major global biodiversity commitments, but I do have hope for our natural world. Nature isn't just there for us to observe and enjoy. We are a part of nature, and so I have hope that everyone who flocks to COP16 from around the world, will want Peace with Nature (the theme of the event), for themselves, their children and generations to come. And that starts with saving it now.



The COP16 opening ceremony



ANEESHWAR Kunchala is a nine-year-old wildlife campaigner and officially the world's youngest newspaper columnist! He shot to fame as a finalist on *Britain's Got Talent*. Now, he's presenting the documentary *Save Our Wildlife* from Sky Kids and Sky Zero. You can watch it at first.news/climatecrisis.

Aneeshwar's Animal of the Week is the...

PLATYPUS



HABITAT:

Freshwater systems across eastern Australia.

FUN FACTS:

- Male platypuses are venomous. They have sharp, lethal stingers on their legs.
- Like sharks, platypuses use electric fields to help them find food underwater.

SPECIAL SUPERPOWER:

A platypus is one of only five egg-laying mammal species, known as monotremes.

CONSERVATION STATUS:

They are near threatened, says the International Union for Conservation of Nature.



Aneeshwar's platypus art

We're asking you to send in photos of your own drawings or paintings of wildlife to add to an online gallery. Ask a parent, guardian or teacher to send in your photos by emailing them to yournews@firstnews.co.uk.



Inírida flowers

THE logo for COP16 includes the flower of Inírida. These native Colombian blooms are known as 'everlasting flowers' because they can resist extreme weather and keep their shape even when they're cut and dried to be used for decoration. The conference's organisers say it's a symbol that they're aiming to "maintain life on the planet forever".