

# CHAPTER 3

## THE EARTH

The third planet from the sun. Our home. Home to 9 million other species. The only planet with liquid water at its surface. The only planet in the solar system with 21% oxygen. As far as we know, the only planet in the solar system that sustains life. Imagine a political party that prioritises the protection of the land, the seas and their inhabitants. Imagine one that believes that animals have a right to flourish and aren't just a means to the end of human satisfaction. Imagine one that believes the common good embraces other species and not just our own. That's what a real political party, the Green Party, does.

The Earth is our home, and this is what we are doing to it:

- We have lost half the wild animals on Earth in the past 40 years.
- We lose between 200 and 100,000 species every year. This is between 1,000 and 10,000 times faster than the natural extinction rate.
- We are causing a 'sixth extinction'. The other five occurred naturally; this one is down to us.
- We have increased CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations from a pre-industrial 280 parts per million (ppm) to about 400 ppm.
- Global temperatures are due to rise between 1.5 and 4.8 degrees C by 2100. And that's just the internationally agreed range without feedback effects. Many experts are predicting rises as high as 6 degrees C.

For the first time in the history of the Earth one species is changing it forever – the human species. They call this new era the 'Anthropocene'. We now have our very own geological epoch.

This brings with it massive responsibilities, which no other party understands or acknowledges. The rich and powerful, in particular, have spent too long treating the Earth like an indestructible storehouse, to be thoughtlessly pillaged of its natural resources.

- UK biodiversity is threatened by development and agricultural practices such as intensive farming, the draining of wetlands and the deforesting of hills.
- Genetic selection is causing endemic health and welfare problems in domestic and farmed animals.
- Animal experimentation is still routine; millions of animals suffer pain and death every year in the UK.
- Overfishing is devastating marine ecosystems.
- Our attitude to the natural world is epitomised by the fact that some circuses still tour with wild animals, including zebras, lions, snakes, tigers and camels.

The Green Party will put policies in place that will stop us treating other species and the wider environment as a means to the satisfaction of humans only. This is because the common good includes other species too. We depend on them for our own welfare. Every second breath we take is made possible by phytoplankton releasing oxygen into the oceans. As the oceans acidify and heat up through global warming, their capacity to 'fix' CO<sub>2</sub> and release oxygen is compromised. This is interdependence at work, and we ride roughshod over it at our peril. But we should also care for other species because the planet is their home too; we share it with them and we need to take their interests and well-being – as well as ours – into account.