

NATIONAL  
GEOGRAPHIC

IMPACT  
STORY LAB

Flora, Fauna, *Funga*

IMPACT REPORT



# THE FILM

The National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab created the short film *Flora, Fauna, Funga* to raise awareness, evoke awe and encourage conservation communities to recognize fungi as its own distinct kingdom within the natural world.

The film follows Chilean mycologist Giuliana Furci's search for new mushrooms in far southern Chile, on the main island of Tierra del Fuego. She's joined by biologist and author Merlin Sheldrake and mycologist Toby Kiers from SPUN, the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks, whose goal is to map the mycorrhizal networks of the world.

Together, the three scientists illuminate how—through nutrient cycling and the essential relationships they form with plants—fungi underpin every ecosystem on Earth, and outline a strategy for greater fungal inclusion in conservation policy.



# THE TEAM

**The Impact Story Lab** is an award-winning creative unit that combines world-class storytelling with social and behavioral science in order to drive positive change for our Explorers.

## COLLABORATORS



**The Fungi Foundation** is a global organization that explores fungi to increase knowledge of their diversity, promote innovative solutions to contingent problems, educate about their existence and applications, as well as recommending public policy for their conservation.



**The Society For Protection of Underground Networks** is a scientific research organization founded to map mycorrhizal fungal communities and advocate for their protection.

# EXPLORER SPOTLIGHT



PHOTO CREDIT: FUNGI FOUNDATION

## GIULIANA FURCI

Giuliana Furci is a field mycologist, fungal activist, author and founder, and director of the Fungi Foundation, the first NGO dedicated to fungal

conservation in the world. She is an associate at Harvard University, a National Geographic Explorer, a Dame of the Order of the Star of Italy and the deputy chair of the IUCN Fungal Conservation Committee. Giuliana is the author of several titles, including a series of three field guides to Chilean fungi. She has co-authored 14 peer-reviewed publications, including the publication that delimits the term “funga,” and the 3F Proposal - Fauna, Flora & Funga, as well as the first “State of the World's Fungi” (Kew, 2018).

*“The film catalyzed the campaign to thousands more viewers than we could ever have imagined and is frequently mentioned to me as being seen by decision makers and people around the world. It is also a part of a larger, bold commitment by National Geographic that helps inspire fungi conservation globally.”*

# IMPACT IN NUMBERS

1

**National Geographic Cover Story**, with 20k+ views of the digital issue



140,000+

**Views** via YouTube, with Instagram videos viewed more than 4.5 million times

13

**Countries** signed onto a resolution protecting fungi alongside plants and animals following the UN Biodiversity Conference screening



PHOTO CREDIT: FUNGI FOUNDATION

12+

**Organizations** adopted the term 'funga' or are now including fungi in conservation frameworks

500+

**Signatures** to the Fauna Flora Funga pledge since March 2024

20+

**Screenings** in 5 different countries, including 14 film festivals and 3 film awards, as well as conservation gatherings

# SCIENCE-LED IMPACT

As part of the Impact Story Lab's commitment to science-led strategies, our media projects work to move audiences and collaborators along a continuum of awareness and engagement toward becoming change-makers. This outcomes-oriented approach to storytelling is at the heart of every Impact Story Lab project.

**The Impact Story Lab moves audiences along this continuum toward action.**



PHOTO CREDIT: SAM SHELINE



No knowledge of issue and/or attitudes & beliefs are opposed to the ultimate change

Critical building block to individual and social change

Changes in attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and a shift from awareness to action

Ongoing or collective action generates greater support and a sustained movement

Ultimate social and/or individual change achieved



# IMPACT GOALS

Leveraging this **National Geographic Society Impact Story Lab** science-led process, the film identified three core goals around which the film's narrative and the campaign's tactics were designed and implemented.

## IMPACT GOAL 1

Persuade conservation nonprofits and relevant government organizations to add fungi into their definitions of wildlife and conservation plans in order to increase their recognition as one of the key pillars of life on Earth.

**TACTIC:** The team hosted film screenings at strategic conservation convenings and screened the film for movement leaders.

## IMPACT GOAL 2

Raise awareness and generate engagement from the public about the global importance of fungi in our ecosystem.

**TACTIC:** The team promoted the film and the work of the Fungi Foundation to the general public and beyond.

## SUPPORTING GOAL

Support movement leaders, like the Fungi Foundation, in their goal to educate and uplift public policy for conservation of fungi by providing storytelling as a tool for their mission

**TACTIC:** The film included a call to action that led audiences to the Fauna Flora Funga pledge.

# IMPACT OVERVIEW



PHOTO CREDIT: MATEO BARENENGOA

The impact strategy for *Flora, Fauna, Funga* focused on highlighting the power of fungi, socializing the use of the term ‘funga’ to the conservation community and beyond, inspiring adoption of ‘funga’ as a new pillar of work in the community that could stand alongside ‘fauna’ and ‘flora’, and raising awareness around the importance of fungi in global ecosystems.

Long considered ‘lower plants’ by early naturalists, fungi have been under-studied and under-appreciated for centuries. Through the film, we meet the incredible scientists working to change that.

The film and impact campaign successfully raised awareness that inspired action. This included an increase in pledge signatures in the months since the film premiered and a feature of the film and Giuliana Furci’s work in the *Fabulous Fungi* issue of National Geographic Magazine (including an announcement of National Geographic’s adoption of mycologically-inclusive language). The film continues to serve as a tool for the larger movement - led by organizations like Fungi Foundation and SPUN - to socialize the term ‘funga’ and recognize fungi as an invaluable piece of the conservation puzzle.

# KEY RESULTS

## Increased socialization of the term flora, fauna, funga

March 2024 - the month that the film premiered and was featured in National Geographic Magazine - had the most-ever mentions of 'flora, fauna, funga' on X (formerly Twitter).



## Increased commitment of adoption of 'funga' in conservation frameworks

After the film premiered, the Fungi Foundation reported an increase from one signature a day to an average of 17 signatures a day to the pledge, and more than a dozen organizations have adopted the use of 'fungi' or 'funga'. This includes Cardiff University, the National Institute of Biodiversity of Ecuador, the Darwin Foundation, and a proposed national grade school curriculum in Chile.

## Increased support for organizations working on fungi conservation

Since March 2024 the Fungi Foundation has reported over 500 new signatures to the Fauna Flora Funga pledge.



# EVALUATION

We conducted audience surveys at several major screenings, where we asked audience members to report their knowledge and support for fungi before and after watching the film.

Surveys were conducted with over 250 audience members at 2 film festivals (the DC Environmental Film Festival and the American Conservation Film Festival) and 2 scientific convenings (the Royal Geographical Society and the UN Biodiversity Conference).

Audiences at scientific convenings like COP and RGS had a baseline understanding of fungi and the conservation landscape as professionals who work in the space. This audience is likely **aware**, and potentially **engaged**, in the issue, but we were looking to move them to **support** within their area of work. Audiences at film festivals were a bit more varied - ranging from a more general audience, to film professionals, to fellow conservation professionals. Generally we were looking to move these audiences from **unaware/aware** to **engaged** about this issue.



PHOTO CREDIT: MATEO BARRENGOIA

# EVALUATION

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

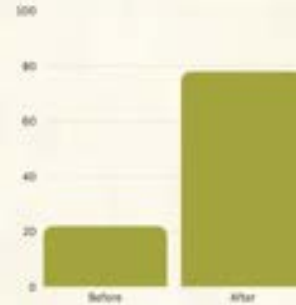
**How likely are you to think about fungi when you take action related to conservation?**

*On average scientific convenings had a larger base knowledge of fungi prior to viewing the film, but still had a 300% increase to answering “Very Likely” after viewing.*

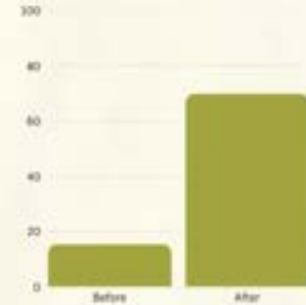
**How likely were you to use the phrase “flora, fauna and funga” as a replacement for the phrase “flora and fauna” in your speech and/or writing?**

*For audiences at film festivals, this likely was the first time hearing about the term ‘funga’. Audiences here had a 12x increase to answering “Very Likely” after viewing the film.*

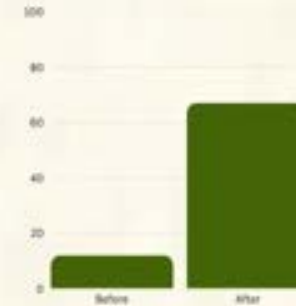
## SURVEY RESULTS



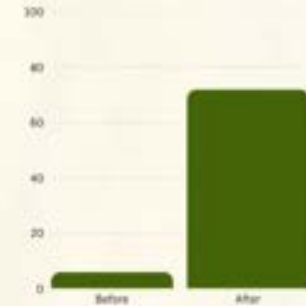
**Scientific Convenings**



**Film Festivals**



**Scientific Convenings**



**Film Festivals**

# SNAPSHOT: SURVEY RESPONSES

*“I did not realize there was a conservation effort or to be honest a need for the effort. I’m glad I do now.”*

- Attendee, ACFF

*“I’m thrilled to know there is a dedicated Funga protection organisation! I now know where to find more information about Funga and include it in research proposals.”*

- Attendee, RGS

*“I knew somehow about the richness and importance of soil in our efforts for conservation, but I gained [the] deepest knowledge and understanding now about the importance of funga”*

- Attendee, COP

*“ I never thought about bringing knowledge of fungi into the policy conversation until now!”*

- Attendee, DCEFF



PHOTO CREDIT: MATEO BARRENGOIA



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# THANK YOU

To learn more and follow ISL's future projects please visit  
[www.natgeo.org/impactstorylab](http://www.natgeo.org/impactstorylab)

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