country. Yellowstone and Glacier National Park in Montana rival the White House and the Smithsonian as tourist attractions.

Similarly beloved national parks exist in other countries. The United Kingdom protected the Peak District in 1951 and now has 15 national parks. China started to protect nature reserves in the 1950s and now has jewels such as the Zhangjiajie National Forest Park and Jiuzhaigou nature reserve. In 2007, Pudacuo National Park became what is sometimes claimed to be the country's first true 'national park' (as it reaches standards laid down by the International Union for Conservation of Nature).

It has even been suggested that cities themselves can be parks, rather than just containing them. A campaign has been launched to have London declared a kind of urban national park. This might seem a backwards device — in general, parks are established in beautiful places that people love, not established to make places beautiful and encourage people to love them. But it goes to show the affection that many feel towards places classified as parks, be they vast national expanses or local patches of scrubby grass.

This affection is not based solely on a misty-eyed yearning for the outdoors. There is an evidence base that parks are a good thing. Many studies have confirmed that they come with significant benefits. They seem to make people who use them healthier and happier. They make local ecosystems more diverse and more resilient. They can even help to mitigate climate change to a small degree.

But not everyone is happy when land is set aside in parks and other uses are limited. In the United States, a group of armed men have seized — and, as *Nature* went to press, were still in control of — the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. Although there are a plethora of issues related to that act of insurgency, this event is linked to a dispute over attempts by the federal government to control cattle grazing so as to protect a species of tortoise.

This situation might be extreme. But the story of conflict between park authorities and people who may once have worked inside park boundaries, or who wish to work there, is universal. Last week, 60 non-governmental organizations again raised the issue of threats to the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the last remaining strongholds for mountain gorillas. The prospect of drilling for oil in the park itself has been of concern in the past, and environmental groups are now warning that oil drilling in nearby Uganda could harm the ecosystem of which the park forms a part.

"Setting aside an area as a park should not be used as a fig leaf for a lack of a wider environmental approach."

Things have been equally fraught at sea. As governments have created more and more 'marine protected areas', fishermen have railed against being excluded from waters they once hauled nets in. Researchers have questioned whether many of these areas are actually protecting what needs to be safeguarded. And there are questions about just how protected some of these areas are, and whether countries are gaming systems to hit international targets.

The spirit of international targets to protect 17% of terrestrial areas and 10% of marine areas certainly intends that they be reached by protecting places that warrant support, not those that are easy to protect because no one cares about exploiting what is there.

Paradoxically, as it becomes ever more apparent that we need to protect areas of outstanding beauty and delicate ecology, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is not enough to do only this. Setting aside an area as a park should not be used as a fig leaf for a lack of a wider environmental approach. Cities, agricultural landscapes, wasteland and seas open to industry all need to be managed in a sensible and planned fashion.

We need more parks. But the real challenge is to make people treat the whole planet with the respect that most show to their parks. ■

Found out

Self-doubt is a pernicious affliction that can overwhelm researchers.

Oh good grief, why did I ever say that I would write something about imposter syndrome? What do I know about it, really? I'm not a psychologist or a researcher or a proper expert, I'm just a journalist. I thought I knew what imposter syndrome was — that some people don't call it a syndrome as such, because that implies a mental disorder. And I thought that I had suffered from those feelings of doubt and inadequacy about my abilities, but now I'm not sure. Maybe other people just suffer from imposter syndrome more badly than I do.

What if I simply tell people to go and read the Careers feature on page 555 that describes how imposter syndrome can affect people in science, and which offers some useful tips on overcoming what, as it turns out, are very common feelings? But then again, won't that make it clear that I don't have anything else to say?

Maybe I can deflect attention from my own pitiful performance by citing talented celebrities who have admitted to sometimes feeling like frauds and imposters. The multiple-Oscar-winning film star Meryl Streep perhaps? I'm sure I read somewhere, though I might be wrong, that she once said she couldn't understand why anyone would want to watch her on screen because she felt she couldn't act. Or the famous and award-gathering author Maya Angelou, who after each of her eleven books, said she felt that this was the time she was going to be found out.

See, I have done the research. I do know what I am talking about, so why does it feel as if everyone around me is simply better at this than me? I bet that's the way the editor thinks, too. Maybe this would be a good time to throw in an Einstein quote, and seek some reflected glory: "The exaggerated esteem in which my lifework is held makes me very ill at ease. I feel compelled to think of myself as an involuntary swindler."

I wish I had that Dunning–Kruger effect, the almost opposite experience to imposter syndrome in which people who really aren't qualified or knowledgeable show remarkable (and misplaced) confidence in their abilities and decisions. Life would be so much easier then, or at least it would seem that way.

The thing about imposter syndrome is that it's been known and written about since the late 1980s, and yet each generation of young scientists (and teachers, nurses, jet pilots and so on) feel isolated and anxious because of it. They feel that they are the only ones to have these crippling self-doubts, as if someone is about to tap them on the shoulder and confess that the whole situation — the job, the responsibility, the career — is an elaborate hoax and they should go home and stop being so presumptuous as to believe that they had anything to offer.

They need to know that these thoughts and ideas are common, and in fact are most common among genuine high achievers. They should be told that rejection — of papers, grants, ideas — in science is the norm and that they shouldn't lose heart when it happens. After all, this is a field of human endeavour in which experts boast about how little they know and proudly display their margins of error. Young and vulnerable researchers need to know that if they tell someone — a friend or colleague or mentor — about how they are feeling, then they will almost certainly hear the words 'me too' and will feel better.

I should tell them that. If only I could find the right words. ■

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