

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Website

Exploring the Beauty, Science, and Urgency of Conservation

# Usability Report

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

About the TNC

Website Analysis

Competitive Analysis

Personas

Survey and Interview Design

Card Sorting

Diary Study Proposal

Heuristic Evaluation

Usability Testing

# Executive Summary

This report presents a comprehensive usability evaluation and redesign proposal for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) website (nature.org). As a global leader in environmental conservation, TNC relies on its digital presence to drive two primary goals: generating revenue through donations and providing critical scientific information to a diverse audience. While the current website excels in high-quality visual storytelling and clear mission-driven messaging, this research identifies significant friction points where business goals and user needs conflict.

## Key Findings

- Information Overload
- Discoverability Issues
- Navigation Challenges

## Solutions

- Streamline Information Architecture
- Increase Financial Transparency
- Enhance Mobile Usability

# About the Organization

**The Nature Conservancy is a global environmental nonprofit working to create a world where people and nature can thrive.**

Their mission is to conserve the lands and waters in which all life depends.

Founded in the U.S. through grassroots action in 1951, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has grown to become one of the most effective and wide-reaching environmental organizations in the world. Thanks to more than a million members and the dedicated efforts of our diverse staff and over 1,000 scientists, we impact conservation in 83 countries and territories: 39 by direct conservation impact and 44 through partners.

Our planet faces the interconnected crises of rapid climate change and biodiversity loss. We have years, not decades, to address these existential threats.



# Website Analysis - nature.org

Overall, the Nature Conservancy website does a great job in making their mission and vision clear throughout the website. The images they've chosen are simple but breathtaking which evokes the website user to take action and support their mission. They also make their call-to-action apparent with the Donate + Renewal membership buttons at the top right corner signifying a major focus on gaining conversions. The typography is also a clean sans-serif which makes the site easily readable across multiple devices.

A few changes resolve around the site's information architecture. Although they do have a section about "What's New in Nature" which highlights their latest successes, analysis suggests that there should be more of a focus on this news as it would give the visitor more of a perspective into what is currently impacting the organization and their priorities. This adjustment would make it easier for the casual visitor to identify the Nature Conservancy's most urgent priorities.



# Site Requirements

Nature.org currently comes up as the 2<sup>nd</sup> runner up according to Google Search when the word “nature” is entered. It is competing with nature.com which is a publication journal about science and technology.

## 01 Business Requirements

The primary marketing goal for nature.org is to generate revenue and leads. In order for this non-for-profit organization survive, they continually need to be funded. The website heavily focuses on converting visitors into donors or turning them into monthly subscribers. This in turn drives many of the features highlighted such as a big donate button and pop-up lightboxes asking for newsletter signups.

## 02 User Requirements

The user arrives to the nature.org site to primarily learn more about land and water conservation, different preservations around the world as well as about where their donation is going to. The average user is looking to learn more about climate change, take action against it, and/or support an organization that is doing the hard work.

The Business Requirements and User Requirements conflict when the business goal (making funds) is impeding on the user goal (information consumption). Similar to the cat video concept we watched in class this week, although the ux/web designer was hired by the business (nature.org), the overall goal is to satisfy their client which is the website users looking to support nature conservation.

# Comparative Analysis

The study chose to focus on three other major environmental non-profit organizations: The World Wildlife Fund, The Sierra Club, and The Natural Resources Defense Council.

## COMPARISON SUMMARY

All four of these organizations share a similar purpose in environmental protection but approach their digital strategies differently. The WWF leans heavier on the emotional hook of suffering animals. This makes it more visually impactful to the general public. Sierra Club frames their organization as more of a community movement than a direct transaction. The NRDC uses direct law and policies to drive their change rather than focusing on the “boots on the ground” work.

	<b>The Nature Conservancy</b> nature.org	<b>World Wildlife Fund</b> worldwildlife.org	<b>Sierra Club</b> sierraclub.org	<b>NRDC</b> nrdc.org
<b>Features</b>	Carbon footprint calculator Explore local preserves	Shop Integration – includes a shop  Species Directory	Event Finder Chapter sub-sites Calendar Integration	Action Center  Toolkits + How-Tos on how to make change
<b>Strengths</b>	Clean Design Readable Text Includes a lot of photography	Branding is on point  Simple Information Architecture	Personalized site based on geographical location	Accessible and contains high contrast text + clear buttons
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Call to Action Clutter - a lot of different buttons	Some content is buried 3-4 pages deep	The UI layout interface feels older and less responsive	Lacks visual appeal as it is a bit more text-heavy than the other examples

# User Personas

A persona is a simple tool to create your product with a specific target user in mind rather than a generic one. It's a representation of the real target audience data, gathered in previous research such as user interview.

## **Fictional Yet Grounded**

Built from real data, surveys, or market research.

## **User-Centered Planning**

Guides decisions in UX, content, and marketing.

## **A Communication Tool**

Aligns understanding across departments and stakeholders.

# Margaret Evans



## The Legacy Leaver

Age  
**68 years old**

Location  
**Chicago, IL**

Occupation  
**Retired Educator & Grandmother**

Marital Status  
**Married, 4 Grandchildren**

**"I need to know my money is actually making a difference for the future."**

## Social Media Use



## Personality Slider



Margaret is a retired history teacher who has saved for retirement and is now planning the next phase of her life. She is currently searching for organizations to support. She is not swayed by current trends and values stability and fiscal responsibility. She reads every word on a page and gets frustrated when websites don't include phone numbers. She treats a donation like an investment.



### Frustrations and Challenges

- Dropdown menus
- Text needs to be legible/easy to read
- Too many pop-ups create roadblocks



### Goals

- Needs to see tangible results
- Clear way to access a Planned Giving employee
- Accessibility to Annual Reports

## Trusted Brands



## Scenario

Margaret received a mailer about including The Nature Conservancy in her will. She goes to her computer to find out more. She types in their website from the brochure and finds the main "Donate Now" button because but has to scroll down to find out more about Planned Giving. She navigates to the footer looking for "Financials" or "About Us." She downloads the 2024 Annual Report and reads it in full. Satisfied, she looks for the "Planned Giving" section to find the tax ID number to give to her lawyer.

# Julian Rivera



## The Eco-Advocate

Age  
**24 years old**

Location  
**Saint Paul, Minnesota**

Occupation  
**Grad Student, Barista**

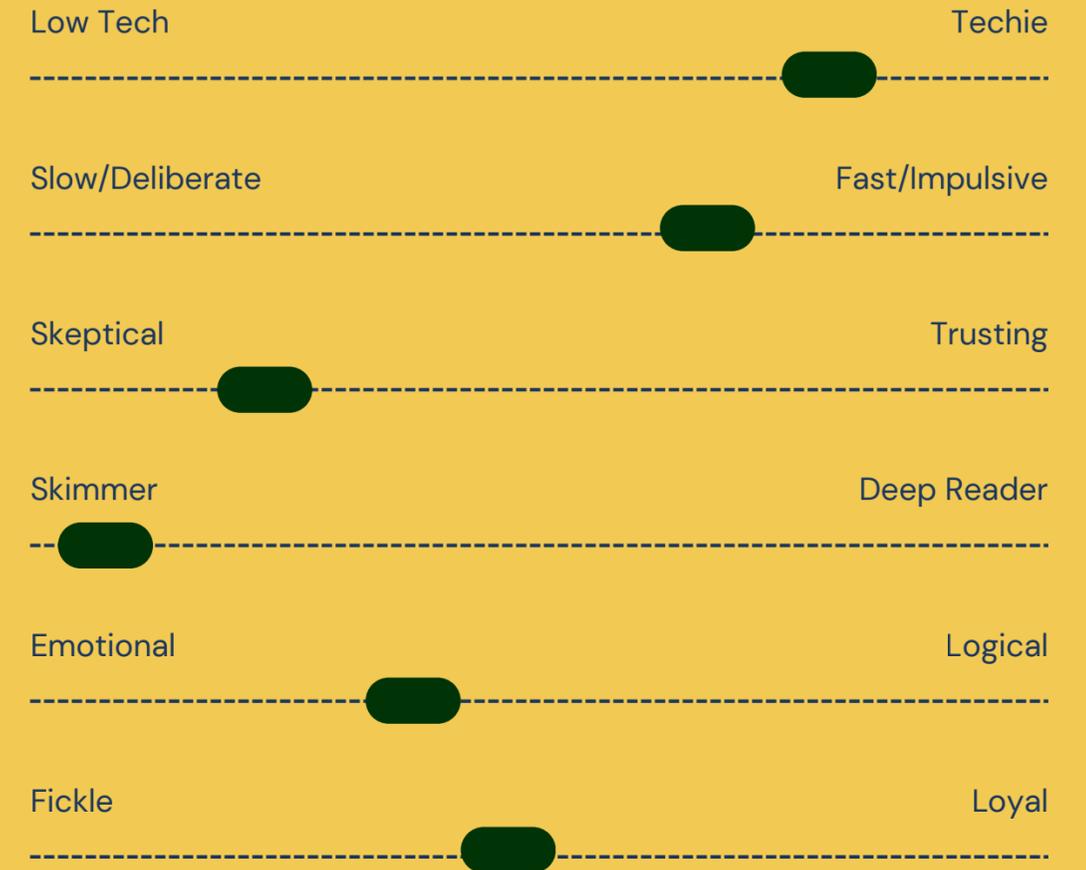
Marital Status  
**Single, Socially active**

**“If we don’t act right now, there won’t be anything left to save”**

## Social Media Use



## Personality Slider



Julian has a lot of anxiety due to the continuous destruction of our planet. Although he doesn't have much money, he has a lot of energy and social influence. He currently is a social media activist who is skeptical of large conglomerates. He wants to find a way to participate in a movement physically such as volunteering or protests and digitally sharing content rather than donating money.

### Goals

- Wants to find local events (cleanups, tree planting)
- Wants to be able to see other real people involved



### Frustrations and Challenges

- Paywall - being asked to donate before volunteering
- Forms that aren't optimized for mobile

## Trusted Brands



## Scenario

Julian was scrolling Instagram when he came across a post about a new bill that would harm the environment. He clicks on their link in the bio which leads to nature.org. Julian is currently mobile and is on the bus where he quickly scans the homepage and is looking for a take action button. He wants to sign a petition using autofill and looks to share it on his story on Instagram to try to get his friends to sign it too.

# Sarah Chen



**The Corporate Partner**

Age  
**42 years old**

Location  
**San Francisco, CA**

Occupation  
**Head of Sustainability**

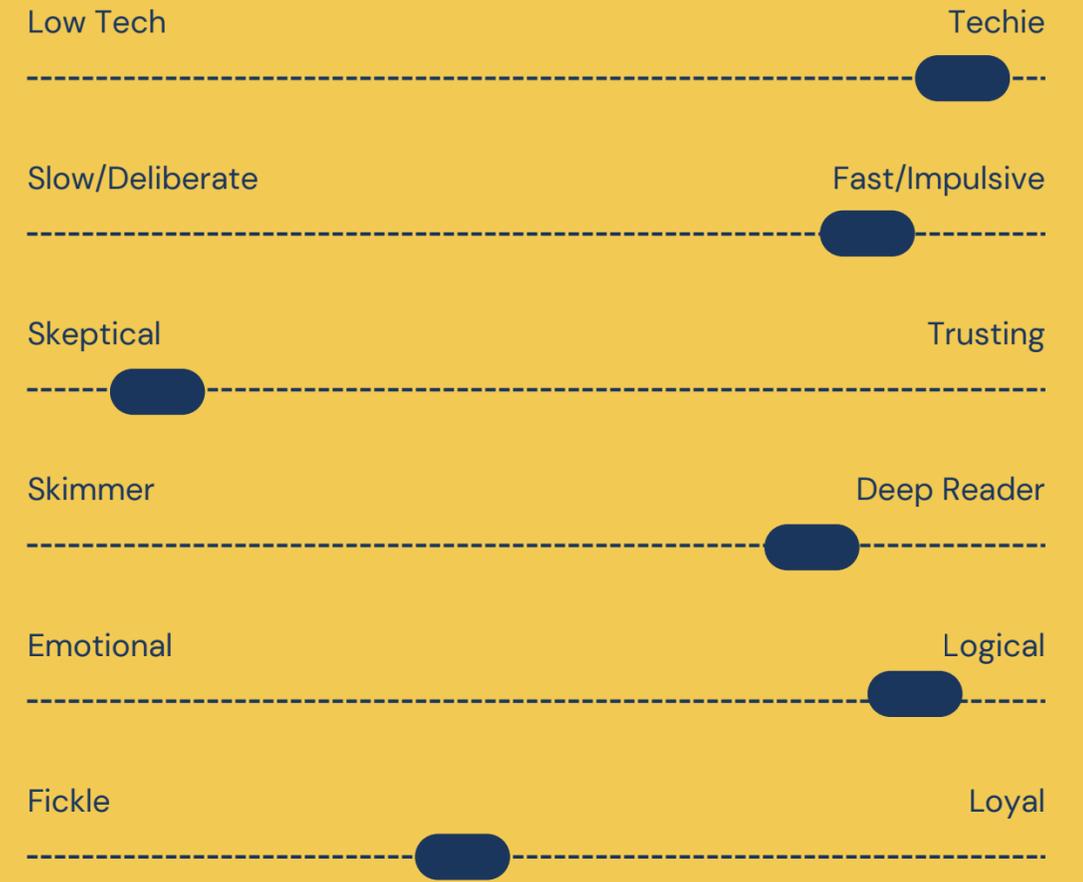
Marital Status  
**Married**

**“Show me the data. I just need to prove the impacts to my board”**

## Social Media Use



## Personality Slider



Sarah came across the Nature Conservancy through work, not browsing the internet. She is currently looking for a partner to support her tech company’s “green initiative”. She is highly educated and requests hard data, white papers and scientific credibility in order to invest in a project. She views the TNC as a business partner and not a charity.

### Frustrations and Challenges



- Internal site search
- Generic info@ email addresses instead of corporate

### Trusted Brands



**Bloomberg**

**The Economist**

### Scenario

Sarah is currently working on a presentation about “Carbon Neutrality Strategies” for her company’s Q2 meeting. She visits nature.org on her laptop to learn more about carbon neutrality. She then navigates to the carbon footprint calculator as well as the Our Science section to see if there is any helpful data that could be used for her presentation. She scans for keywords that might be of use to her and downloads the PDFs for further review offline.

### Goals



- Needs to a dedicated For Business section for the website (distinct from individual giving)
- Needs downloadable executive summaries

# Survey Design



**Access  
Survey**

UX surveys help you gather information about users' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors related to a product or service they encounter, and online surveys form a part of the broader field of usability surveys.

## Who do we want to learn about?

Conversation Enthusiasts  
and Philanthropic  
Individuals who visit TNC

## What questions are we trying to answer?

- Content Priority
- Device Context

## How will you distribute survey and collect responses?

Building the survey on  
Google Forms will allow  
for it to be easily  
accessible.

# Survey Proposal



**Access  
Survey**

The goal of this survey is to gather quantitative data regarding user trust and the frequency of visits.

We want to gather data:

- **Target Audience:** Current TNC members and social media followers.
- **Distribution:** E-mail newsletter
- **Key Metric:** Net Promoter Score (NPS) and various point scales.

# Survey Questions - 1

- **How familiar are you with The Nature Conservancy (TNC)?**
  - This question establishes the groundwork between the user's relationship with the brand. In terms of design, this question will give us a perspective into what our site should focus more on (newcomers vs. long-time members).
- **Which of the following environmental issues are you most concerned about? (Select up to 3)**
  - ANSWERS: Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, Water Scarcity, Deforestation, Ocean Health, Air Pollution, Sustainable Agriculture, Plastic Pollution, Other)
  - This question identifies the specific causes that this audience resonates with most and also influences the site's Information Architecture.
- **How important is environmental conservation to you personally?**
  - (Scale 1-10)
  - This question measures how passionate this user is about our cause. The data point can be used to see how to keep this type of user engaged.
- **In the past 12 months, how often have you engaged in activities to support environmental causes (e.g., volunteering, donating, advocacy)?**
  - (Never, Rarely, Monthly, Weekly)
  - This question distinguishes the casual observer versus active participant. This data point can help us design the need for volunteering/advocate (CTA) buttons.

# Survey Questions - 2

- **What motivates you to support or learn about environmental causes?**
  - This question gives us a peek into the user's psychological drivers which can influence the sort of language we want to include on our communications.
- **On a scale of 1-5, how confident are you in your ability to make a meaningful impact on environmental issues?**
  - This question measures the level that one feels self-efficacy. If it is on the low side, we should prioritize success stories and the annual report.
- **How do you prefer to receive information about environmental conversation efforts?**
  - This question identifies the user's top consumption methods which will prioritize what platforms need to be front and center.
- **Which of the following TNC digital resources have you used or are you aware of?**
  - This question asks about a user's awareness of our brand. The answers can help us determine where users might be missing out.
- **How would you rate your experience using TNC's website?**
  - This question answers a basic baseline on how satisfied user's are when visiting us. A low score can determine if we need to big redesign or smaller adjustments.

# Survey Questions - 3

- **What type of content do you look for when visiting an environmental nonprofit's website?**
  - This question asks what their primary goal is. This can influence what content we want at the forefront.
- **Please indicate your agreement with the following: (Trustworthy / Easy to Navigate / Easy to Understand / Motivated to take action)**
  - This question inquires to the user about the usability of the site. Adjustments can be made to navigation depending on feedback.
- **What is your primary method for accessing the internet?**
  - This question inquires the importance of mobile vs desktop. Should there be more of a focus on mobile?
- **What is the single most important action you believe TNC should prioritize to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss?**
  - This question asks the user about their opinion on what the organization should focus on, resulting in a highlight of information on the hero section.
- **Are you a current donor or member of The Nature Conservancy?**
  - This question asks how invested they are. What elements are missing in terms of showing appreciation.
- **If you are a donor/member, how important is seeing a clear breakdown of how your funds are used?**
  - This question gauges financial transparency. How important is it for our organization to show where the funds are exactly going.

# Survey Questions - 4

- **What is your gender identity?**
  - This question was included to grab a rough demographic of our audience. Helps ensure imagery and language is both inclusive and representative of the user base.
- **What is your age range?**
  - This question was included to grab a rough demographic of our audience. Potential accessibility updates for an older demographic.
- **In which country do you primarily reside?**
  - This question was included to grab a rough demographic of our audience. Need for multi-language or translation features on the website?
- **Which of the following best describes your level of education?**
  - This question was included to grab a rough demographic of our audience. Helps ensure imagery and language is both inclusive and representative of the user base.
- **Do you have any suggestions for improving The Nature Conservancy's digital presence or communication strategy?**
  - This question ensures that the user gets a chance to give any feedback that wasn't specified within the other questions.

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Interview

Exploring the Beauty, Science, and Urgency of Conservation

# Design

Presented by **Austin Gao**

ICM 514

# Research Questions

According to Chapter 9 of “Understanding Your Users” by Kathy Baxter, Catherine Courage, & Kelly Caine, interviews are one of the most frequently used user research techniques. In order to understand more about The Nature Conservancy’s exact audience, the interviews must be focused on a determined set of questions.

- Why choose the Nature Conservancy over another competitor?
- What kind of information are users looking for when visiting the website?
- In terms of usability, how could the website improve?



# Introduction

Hi (First Name), thank you for participating in today's interview. The goal for today is to understand how our website can better serve users interested in environmental conservation. This interview will approximately take one hour.

During this interview, we will be recording this session for research purposes and to ensure that we have captured all elements accurately. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers and that all feedback is valuable. We appreciate your honesty as this feedback will assist us in making further design decisions that will benefit the website and its users. I, myself am not a part of the design team and am a neutral party/moderator.

Finally, I ask that you please read and sign the consent form. If at any time you feel uncomfortable and want to stop, please feel free to stop me and you will be free to leave at any point of this activity.

# Warm-Up

Alright, now let's begin!

To start, I'm going to ask you a couple of warm-up questions to learn more about you:

- **When you think of “saving the planet”, what organizations first come to mind and why?**
- **How do you typically find information about climate change or nature preservation online?**
- **Tell me about a time you felt a strong connection to an environmental cause. What sparked the interest?**

Thank you for answering those first few questions, let's take a deep dive into some more if you are ready.

# Body

1. **What are some of your favorite websites?**
  - a. Why are they your favorite?
  - b. What features make the website better?
2. **What are your goals when visiting a website like nature.org?**
  - a. What features do you find the most useful?
  - b. Are there any that you feel are not useful?
3. **If you were looking for information on a local preserve near you, how would you find it?**
  - a. How easy or difficult was it to find?
4. **What information do you find essential to being on The Nature Conservancy website?**
  - a. Why?
5. **How do you feel about the donation and membership buttons on the site?**
  - a. Does the focus on financial support affect your ability to find info?
6. **How important is it for you to see the latest news about our organization?**
  - a. What do you think the most urgent priorities are for the organization?
7. **How do you access our site differently if you are on your mobile device versus desktop?**
  - a. Are there specific actions you would not do on your mobile device?
8. **What is your first impression of the homepage?**
  - a. Does it feel balanced between visual imagery and text?
9. **What features would you love to see on our website?**
  - a. Why these features specifically?
10. **Are you currently involved with a nature organization?**
  - a. In what ways? (Volunteering, Financial Support, etc..)

01

## Cooling Off

And that's the final formal question! We covered a lot today so thank you again for taking the time to answer and give honest feedback. Before we end, was there a moment in today's conversation that stood out to you the most that The Nature Conservancy could improve upon?



# Conclusion

02

## Wrap-Up

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview. The recording is now stopped. Do you have any final questions for me or the process that we didn't get to today? Thank you again for your time and honest thoughts.

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Card

Exploring the Beauty, Science, and Urgency of Conservation

# Sorting

Presented by **Austin Gao**

ICM 514

# What is Card Sorting?

According to Chapter 11: Card Sorting in Understanding Your Users, card sorting is defined as a user research technique used to uncover the mental models of your users, specifically how they categorize and group information.

# Project Overview & Goals

## TNC Card Sorting Goals

The Nature Conservancy contains a multitude of menus that can make it quite confusing for users to find the specific resources that they are looking for. Due to the many purposes the organization serves, it is imperative to improve upon the site's Information Architecture.

**The goal for this activity is to assess the current IA as well as:**

- Determine where users expect to find specific resources like "Carbon Footprint Calculators" or "Planned Giving."
- Identify clarity issues in labeling conservation categories.

# Methodology

**For this study, a hybrid card sorting format was selected to provide a balance between structured testing and open discovery. Using the Optimal Workshop digital platform, participants were given a set of 30 cards representing a diverse cross-section of TNC's offerings. While a few top-level categories were provided to give the participants a starting point, they were also encouraged to create their own custom labels and groups. This hybrid approach is particularly effective for large non-profits like TNC because it validates whether the current "Giving" and "Science" buckets are functioning properly while allowing users to suggest new, more intuitive ways to organize more optimally.**



# Card Sort

# Introduction Script

Welcome to our TNC card sort study, and thank you for agreeing to participate! The activity shouldn't take longer than 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your response will help us to organize the content on our website. The goal of this study is to understand how users categorize and prioritize information related to conservation, science, and global environmental initiatives. Your input will help determine how the website's navigation and menus should be structured to be more intuitive for the general public.

## **What to Expect**

**Content:** You will be asked to sort 30 digital cards representing different topics on The Nature Conservancy website into groups that make sense to you. You will also be asked to provide names for these groups and "think aloud" as you work.

**Duration:** This session is expected to take approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

**Method:** This is a remote/digital session

**Incentive:** As a token of appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$10 Patagonia gift card upon completion.

# Procedure and Scripts

**Card Sorting Direct Link:** <https://gq1u4k0s.optimalworkshop.com/optimalsort/8ayod4sp>

**Instructions:** Take a look at the list of items on the left. We'd like you to sort those items into groups that make sense to you. Use the groups provided or create your own by dragging and dropping an item from the left into the space on the right. There is no right or wrong answer. Just do what comes naturally. When you're done click "Finished" at the top right.

**Thank you message:** All done, awesome! Thanks again for your participation. Your feedback is incredibly useful in helping to determine how our content should be organized, so we can make our website easier to use.

**Format:** Hybrid Card Sort

**Tools:** Optimal Software

**Card Count:** 30 cards covering Giving, Involvement, Nature, and Media

# About the Participants

## Participant 1

- **Alex**
  - **Male, Age: 22**
  - **College Student, Economics**
  - **Remote Test**
  - **San Diego, CA**
- **Feedback:**
  - Main focus on utility and immediate action. Seeks out "Local" or "Maps" categories first and prefers labeling tools based on their use rather than their scientific category. Views high-level global policy more important than the business stuff that distracts from personal, local engagement.

## Participant 2

- **Mark**
  - **Male, Age: 33**
  - **Data Analyst**
  - **Remote Test**
  - **Newington, CT**
- **Feedback:**
  - Prioritizes trust and emotional connection. Finds technical terms like confusing and prefers more simpler headers. Looking for clear evidence of where donations go before committing.

## Participant 3

- **Jimmy**
  - **Male, Age: 28**
  - **College Student, Dental**
  - **Remote Test**
  - **Boston, MA**
- **Feedback:**
  - Values scientific data. Views the blog as a good media resource for deep learning rather than a simple news feed.

# Example Cards

- One-Time Donation
- Press Releases
- Food and Water Sustainability
- Reforestation Projects
- Carbon Footprint Calculator
- Sign a Petition
- Attend a Local Event
- Travel with TNC
- Workplace Giving
- Annual Report
- Protecting Land and Water
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Adopt a Reef
- Global Policy & Advocacy
- Give a Membership as a Gift
- Find a Nature Preserve Near Me

▼ **Get Involved**

- Leadership & BOD
- Become a Member
- Biodiversity Mapping
- Student Internships

4 items

▼ **Ways to Give/Support**

- Ocean Conservation
- Youth Engagement Programs
- Climate Change Initiatives

3 items

▼ **Location/Region**

- Interactive Map of Protected Lands
- Urban Conservation & Greening Cities
- Global Places We Protect

3 items

▼ **Conversation & Science**

- State-by-State Conservation Impact
- Monthly Giving

2 items

▼ **Media**

- Career Openings

1 items

▼ **Click to rename** 

- Planned Giving

1 items

# Participant Data

Category	Contains	Cards	Freq	Avg pos
About Us	3 different cards	Annual Report	1	3.0
		Career Openings	1	2.0
		Leadership & BOD	1	1.0
Conversation & Science	8 different cards	Ocean Conservation	1	8.0
		Global Places We Protect	1	7.0
		Food and Water Sustainability	1	6.0
		Urban Conservation & Greening Cities	1	5.0
		Reforestation Projects	1	4.0
		Carbon Footprint Calculator	1	3.0
		Climate Change Initiatives	1	2.0
		Protecting Land and Water	1	1.0
		<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>		
Get Involved	8 different cards	Volunteer Opportunities	1	8.0
		Become a Member	1	7.0
		Student Internships	1	6.0
		Sign a Petition	1	5.0
		Travel with TNC	1	4.0
		Adopt a Reef	1	3.0
		Youth Engagement Programs	1	2.0
		Global Policy & Advocacy	1	1.0
		<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>		

Location/Region	5 different cards	Interactive Map of Protected Lands	1	5.0
		State-by-State Conservation Impact	1	4.0
		Attend a Local Event	1	3.0
		Biodiversity Mapping	1	2.0
		Find a Nature Preserve Near Me	1	1.0
		<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>		
Media	1 different cards	Press Releases	1	1.0
Ways to Give/Support	5 different cards	Monthly Giving	1	5.0
		One-Time Donation	1	4.0
		Workplace Giving	1	3.0
		Give a Membership as a Gift	1	2.0
		Planned Giving	1	1.0
		<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>		

# Participant Data (pt. 2)

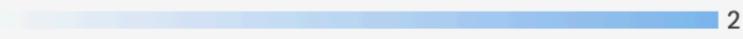
Category	Contains	Cards	Freq	Avg pos	Created by	Agreement	Edit
<input type="checkbox"/> Conversation & Science 12 different cards	Reforestation Projects	2	6.0	2 participants 71%			
	Food and Water Sustainability	2	6.0				
	Global Policy & Advocacy	2	5.0				
	Protecting Land and Water	2	3.0				
	Ocean Conservation	2	1.0				
	Annual Report	1	11.0				
	State-by-State Conservation Impact	1	10.0				
	Interactive Map of Protected Lands	1	9.0				
	Biodiversity Mapping	1	5.0				
	Carbon Footprint Calculator	1	5.0				
	Urban Conservation & Greening Cities	1	3.0				
	Climate Change Initiatives	1	2.0				
	<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>						
<input type="checkbox"/> Get Involved 11 different cards	Student Internships	2	7.0	2 participants 86%			
	Sign a Petition	2	7.0				
	Adopt a Reef	2	6.5				
	Career Openings	2	5.5				
	Travel with TNC	2	5.0				
	Youth Engagement Programs	2	5.0				
	Volunteer Opportunities	2	5.0				
	Attend a Local Event	2	3.0				
	One-Time Donation	1	11.0				
	Become a Member	1	2.0				
	Annual Report	1	1.0				
<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>							

<input type="checkbox"/> Location/Region 8 different cards	Global Places We Protect	2	5.0	2 participants 63%			
	Find a Nature Preserve Near Me	2	2.5				
	Carbon Footprint Calculator	1	6.0				
	State-by-State Conservation Impact	1	5.0				
	Climate Change Initiatives	1	3.0				
	Interactive Map of Protected Lands	1	2.0				
	Biodiversity Mapping	1	2.0				
	Urban Conservation & Greening Cities	1	1.0				
<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>							
<input type="checkbox"/> Media 2 different cards	Leadership & BOD	2	2.0	2 participants 100%			
	Press Releases	2	1.0				
<input type="checkbox"/> Ways to Give/Support 6 different cards	Workplace Giving	2	5.0	2 participants 83%			
	Give a Membership as a Gift	2	2.0				
	Planned Giving	2	2.0				
	Monthly Giving	2	2.0				
	One-Time Donation	1	5.0				
	Become a Member	1	4.0				
<a href="#">Show fewer cards</a>							

# Participant 3 Data

# Standardization Grid

The Standardization Grid serves as an essential step in integrating the various labels created by participants during the hybrid sort. By mapping individual user groups to a set of standardized categories, the grid revealed that while the terminology varied across data, the underlying concept remained the same.

Total participants 0  2

Name	Convers...	Get Invol...	Location...	Media	Ways to ...	Not standardiz...
Adopt a Reef		2				
Annual Report	1	1				
Attend a Local Event		2				
Become a Member		1			1	
Biodiversity Mapping	1		1			
Carbon Footprint Calculator	1		1			
Career Openings		2				
Climate Change Initiatives	1		1			
Find a Nature Preserve Near			2			
Food and Water Sustainabil	2					
Give a Membership as a Gift					2	
Global Places We Protect			2			
Global Policy & Advocacy	2					
Interactive Map of Protected	1		1			
Leadership & BOD				2		
Monthly Giving					2	
Ocean Conservation	2					
One-Time Donation		1			1	
Planned Giving					2	
Press Releases				2		
Protecting Land and Water	2					
Reforestation Projects	2					
Sign a Petition		2				
State-by-State Conservator	1		1			
Student Internships		2				
Travel with TNC		2				
Urban Conservation & Greer	1		1			
Volunteer Opportunities		2				
Workplace Giving					2	
Youth Engagement Program		2				





# Analysis of Card Sort Data

The qualitative data gathered from this study reveals that users prioritize action-oriented language over traditional organizational labels. Throughout the sessions, participants frequently opted to create custom categories using active verbs such as "Find a Nature Preserve" or "Sign a Petition" rather than using the broader, more static labels currently found on the TNC site. Finally, the study confirmed that there is a large interest for locality, as every participant expressed a primary desire to find preserves or events within their immediate geographic area before exploring global conservation policy.

Based on the results of this research, there are several adjustments to the site's Information Architecture that can be recommended. First, the organization should implement a system for high-utility tools. Secondly, TNC should simplify its financial terminology by replacing technical jargon like "Charitable Gift Annuities" with more accessible phrases such as "Gifts that Give Back" or "Legacy Giving." Lastly, to satisfy the high demand for local engagement, the navigation should be restructured to feature a "Near You" or "Find a Preserve" search tool prominently in the primary menu, reducing the clicks required for users to connect with TNC's physical work.

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Diary

Exploring the Beauty, Science, and Urgency of Conservation

# Study

# What is a Diary Study?

**“A diary study is a longitudinal, qualitative research method where participants document their behaviors, thoughts, and experiences with a product or service over time, ranging from a few days to several weeks.”**

### **What questions is this diary study trying to answer?**

- How do users integrate TNC's content into their personal lives over a two-week period?
- At what points do users feel a conflict between their desire for information and the website's donation CTAs?

I chose these two questions to see if there is a lot of friction/overlap between TNC as a business and user requirements.

### **What questions/tasks are you expecting your participants to do?**

- **Log Entry Task**
  - Each time a participant interacts with The Nature Conservancy, it should be logged. Other elements recorded should include: time, device used, trigger for visit, and emotional state.
- **Weekly Reflection**
  - At the end of the week, participants will answer a brief survey regarding what piece of content they resonated with most that week and why.

- **How many people will you include in your sample?**

- A total of 12 people will be recruited
  - This number is good because its small enough to manage qualitative data but large enough to cover a variety of personas

- **How will you choose your sample (sample type)?**

- Our samples will be selected based on the three previously established personas (Margaret, Julian, and Sarah). Ensuring that the data reflects our most valuable targeted audience.

- **What method/format will you use and why?**

- A digital diary program will be used to log entries. Platforms such as DScout and Google Forms makes it simple and mobile-friendly to input data.

- **What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of this method?**

- Benefits: Captures “in-the-moment” feelings, Provides High Validity
- Drawbacks: Requires High Level of Commitment form participants, “Diary fatigue”

- **How long will the study last?**

- This study will last 2 weeks (14 days.) This will allow enough time for participants to experience various instances on the website as well as get a grasp of the overall communications.

- **How will you analyze the results?**

- By using thematic coding, (a technique that involves tagging segments of data such as text, images, or audio with different labels.)
  - Categorizing themes such as Ease of Navigation, Financial Transparency and Educational value will give us a perspective on what users actually value versus what they say they value.



# Diary Example Instructions

Hello and thank you for participating in this research study for The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The purpose of this diary study is to gain a deeper understanding of how our digital presence fits into your daily life. Your insights will directly inform our development team as we look to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of our website for all users.

Please know that all entries are strictly confidential. To protect your privacy, you will be identified only by a participant number, and your responses will be shared exclusively with the UX Research and Development teams. We estimate that each entry will take between 5–10 minutes of your time. Your feedback is vital in helping us protect the lands and waters on which all life depends. As a token of our appreciation, participants who complete the full 14-day study will receive a TNC Supporter Bundle. If you have any questions throughout the process, please reach out to our team at [research@nature.org](mailto:research@nature.org).

# Diary Example

## Tasks/Questions

- What was your primary goal for visiting the site or clicking the link today?
  - (Open-ended)
- Were you successful in accomplishing your goal?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Other\_\_\_
- If you were unsuccessful or only partially successful, what prevented you from finishing?
  - (Open-ended)
- Which device did you use for this interaction?
  - Mobile Phone
  - Tablet
  - Laptop/Desktop
- On a scale of 1–5 (1 being very difficult, 5 being very easy), how would you rate the navigation for this specific task?
- Did any specific imagery or information stand out to you (positive or negative)?
- How long did you spend on the site during this visit?
  - Less than 5 minutes
  - 5–15 minutes
  - 15–30 minutes
  - More than 30 minutes
- Any other thoughts, frustrations, or suggestions you'd like to share?

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Heuristic

Exploring the Beauty, Science, and Urgency of Conservation

# Evaluation

# What is a Heuristic Evaluation?

A heuristic evaluation is a method for identifying design problems in a user interface. Evaluators judge the design against a set of guidelines (called heuristics) that make systems easy to use.

Heuristic	Severity (1-4)	Comments
Visibility of system status	0 1 2 3 4	The site generally informs the user of their location through clear headings. However, when navigating through the "Our Work" subpages, the breadcrumbs are sometimes missing, making it hard to know exactly where you are in the hierarchy.
Match between system & real world	0 1 2 3 4	While many labels are clear, some scientific jargon such as "Biodiversity Mapping" do not immediately resonate with the usual donor. Using more familiar terms like could better match the user's mental model.
User control and freedom	0 1 2 3 4	The search functionality is robust, but there is no easy way to "undo" a filter once several are applied in the "Places We Protect" map view, forcing users to refresh the page to start over.
Consistency and standards	0 1 2 3 4	TNC maintains a high level of consistency in its branding, fonts, and button styles. However, some external-facing donation forms have a slightly different layout than the main site, which can be confusing.
Error Prevention	0 1 2 3 4	On the donation page, error messages only appear after a user attempts to submit a form.
Recognition rather than recall	0 1 2 3 4	The site uses a the menu effectively, so users don't have to remember where specific links are located; they are all visible under the main navigation categories.
Aesthetic & Minimalist Design	0 1 2 3 4	The site is visually stunning but occasionally "cluttered" with too many overlapping graphics and calls-to-action on a single page, which can overload the user's attention
Help and Documentation	0 1 2 3 4	TNC provides an easy-to-find "FAQ" and "Contact Us" section. However, the documentation for specific programs like "Charitable Gift Annuities" is dense and could be made more scannable for the average user.

The Nature  
Conservancy



# Usability

Exploring the Beauty, Science, and Urgency of Conservation

# Testing

Presented by **Austin Gao**

ICM 514

# What is Usability Testing?

Usability testing is observing users as they accomplish a typical user task. Usually, it's done in a lab setting, i.e., when the user navigates a website to perform specific tasks, while a researcher prompts the user to explain their choices.

# Project Overview

## Introduction

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) website serves as a primary hub for global conservation news, scientific resources, and philanthropic engagement. Given the organization's scale, the site must accommodate diverse user goals, from local hiking to worldwide conservational issues. This usability study was conducted to determine how effectively the current interface facilitates these goals. Specifically, the test aimed to uncover whether the "Ways to Give" and "Our Work" sections are as accessible as they are visually impressive, ensuring that the site's beauty does not come at the cost of its utility.



# Methodology

**The testing sessions were conducted remotely via Zoom. Each session followed a standardized script to ensure consistency across the study. Preparatory materials included a formal consent form, a background questionnaire, and a list of five specific tasks designed to test the site's core functionality. By maintaining a passive role during the test, the study was able to observe natural problem-solving behaviors without influencing the participants' choices.**

# About the Participants

## Participant 1

- Alex
  - Male, Age: 22
  - College Student, Economics
  - Remote Test
  - San Diego, CA
  - 28-year old hiker
  - High mobile literacy
  - Low familiarity with TNC Site
  - Social Media: Instagram, TikTok

## Participant 2

- Mark
  - Male, Age: 33
  - Data Analyst
  - Remote Test
  - Newington, CT
  - Potential Donor
  - Interested in browsing through desktop
  - Social Media: Facebook, LinkedIn

## Participant 3

- Jimmy
  - Male, Age: 28
  - College Student, Dental
  - Remote Test
  - Boston, MA
  - Interested in local volunteer opportunities
  - Social Media: Twitter, Instagram

# Task List and Scenarios

We asked participants to complete five tasks that represent the most critical “user journeys” on the TNC website. These tasks included:

1. Locating a nature preserve within 50 miles of their current location
2. Finding the Carbon Footprint Calculator and beginning an assessment
3. Determining the difference between a Monthly Gift versus Planned Giving
4. Finding the most current Annual Report
5. Locate the Sign-up page for the latest volunteer opportunities





# Task Completion Data

Task	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Status
Find a Preserve	1:12	0:55	1:45	Success
Carbon Calculator	2:30	3:15	4:10	Partial
Donation Types	1:50	1:20	2:45	Success
Annual Report	3:10	2:45	5:00+	Failure (P3)
Volunteer Sign-up	1:15	1:40	2:10	Success

# Analysis by Task:

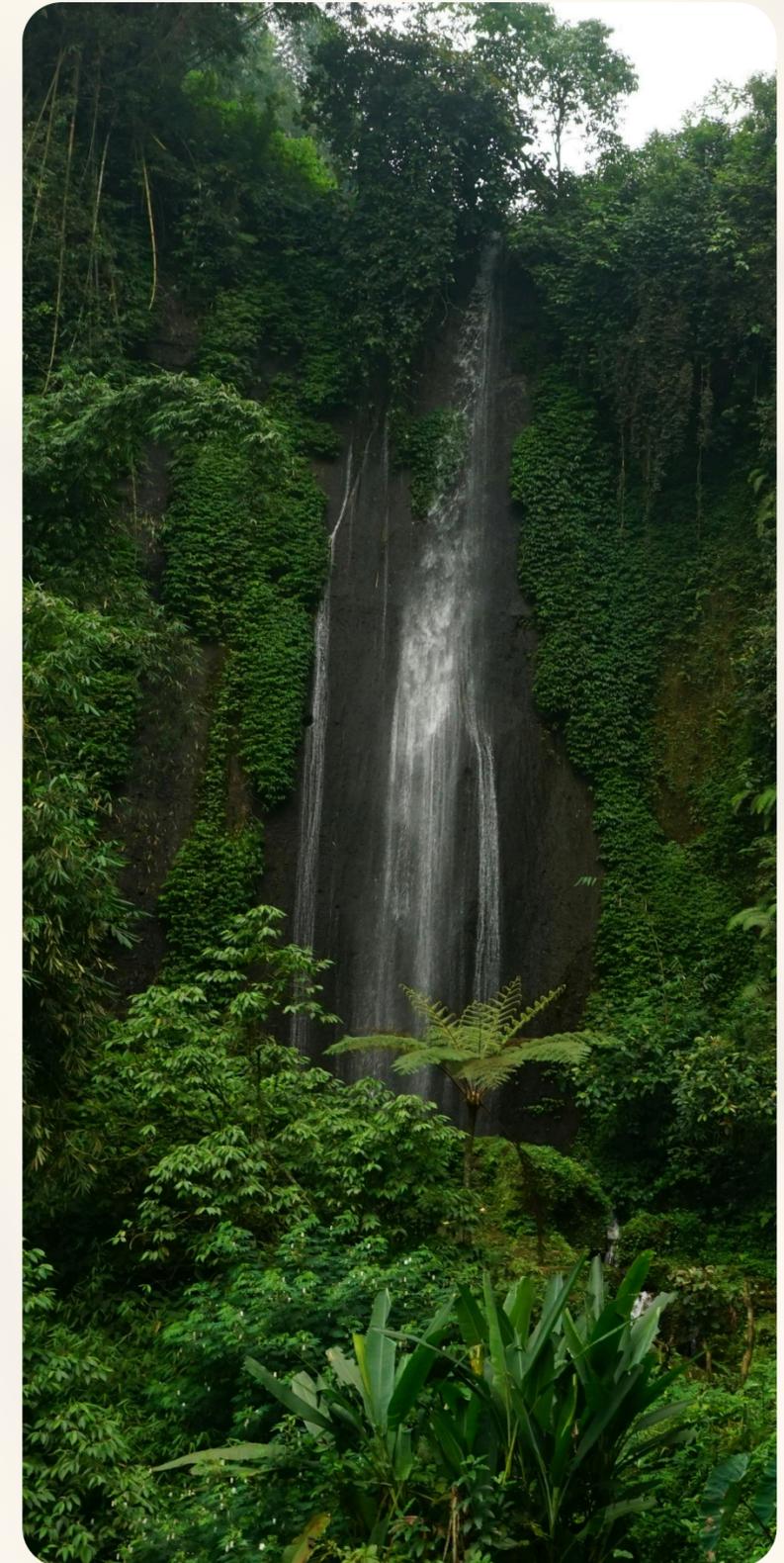
## Giving and Transparency

Analysis of the first two tasks revealed that while the "Find a Preserve" feature is highly visible, the Carbon Footprint Calculator is buried too deep. Participants frequently attempted to use the site's internal search bar when they couldn't find the tool in the main navigation. However, the search results were often cluttered with news articles rather than the tool itself. This suggests that there might be a discoverability issue where the site's most popular interactive tools are being overshadowed by static content.

## Navigation and Search

Tasks related to philanthropy and financial transparency showed that users find the donation interface visually comforting but linguistically confusing. Participant 2 and 3 both struggled to distinguish between different Ways to Give because the labels were too similar in weight.

Furthermore, finding the latest Annual Report proved to be the most difficult task; participants expected it to be under "About Us," but the density of the footer made it difficult to locate. This indicates that critical documents such as these are not as accessible as they need to be for serious donors.



# Problem Areas Identified

The study identified three primary problem areas:

## Information Overload

## Deep Menus

## Jargon-Heavy Labeling



The mega-menu contains too many choices, leading to a contradiction to Hick's Law, where users take longer to make a decision because they are overwhelmed by options. Additionally, participants felt that the lack of a sticky navigation bar made it difficult to return to the homepage after scrolling through long, content-rich science articles, leading to a sense of being lost in the site.

# Task Completion Data

Issue Observed	Severity	Associated Task	Recommendation
Annual Report Visibility	High	Task 4: Financials	Move to 'About Us' menu & cross-link on 'Donate' page.
Planned Giving Jargon	Medium	Task 3: Donation	Rename to 'Legacy Giving' or 'Wills & Estates'.
Buried Tools	High	Task 2: Calculator	Implement 'Dual-Filing' in main navigation.
Search Clutter	Medium	Task 2: Calculator	Prioritize interactive tools in search result ranking.
Lack of Sticky Nav	Low	General Nav	Implement sticky header for long science articles.
Map Control	Medium	Task 1: Preserves	Add 'Clear All Filters' to interactive map interface.

# Recommendations for Improvement

To improve site usability, it is recommended that TNC streamlines its mega-menus by consolidating sub-categories and using more action-oriented labels. Specifically, the Carbon Footprint Calculator should be moved to a higher level. Additionally, the Annual Report should also be linked directly onto the primary Donate page to build immediate trust with potential contributors. Finally, implementing a clearer, more persistent Back to Top or Sticky Menu would significantly improve the experience for users on mobile and tablet devices.

## Conclusion

The usability testing for The Nature Conservancy confirms that while the site excels in visual storytelling, it suffers from an organizationized navigation that can frustrate the average user. By simplifying the path to action: whether that is donating, calculating their own carbon footprint, or finding a local trail. TNC should be able to better serve its diverse audience. Moving forward, the goal should be to ensure that the site's provides an effortless user experience.

# Appendix I: Facilitator Script

**Introduction:** "Hi there, thank you for joining me today. We are testing the usability of The Nature Conservancy website to see how easily users can find information and complete common tasks. I want to emphasize that we are testing the website, not you. You cannot make a mistake. Please 'think aloud' as you navigate, telling me what you are looking for and anything that confuses you. Do you have any questions before we begin?"

**Pre-Test Questions:**

- How often do you visit environmental or non-profit websites?
- Have you ever donated to a conservation organization online?
- On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable do you feel navigating new websites?

# Appendix II: Consent Form

## Participation Agreement:

"I, (Participant Name), agree to participate in this usability study for The Nature Conservancy. I understand that my screen and voice will be recorded for research purposes only and that my identity will remain confidential. I am aware that I may stop the session at any time for any reason."

- Signature: \_\_\_\_\_
- Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix III: Task List and Scenarios

- **Local Engagement:** "You are looking for a place to go birdwatching this weekend. Find a nature preserve within 50 miles of your current location."
- **Interactive Tools:** "You want to know how your lifestyle affects the planet. Find the tool that calculates your carbon footprint and identify the first piece of information it asks for."
- **Philanthropy:** "You want to support TNC, but you prefer to give a one-time gift in honor of a friend. Find where you would select the 'Honor Gift' option."
- **Financial Transparency:** "You want to make sure your donation is being used wisely. Find the most recent 'Annual Report' or 'Financial Statement' on the site."
- **Direct Action:** "You have a free Saturday next month. Find the page where you can sign up for local volunteer events or 'Work Days'."

# Appendix IV: Post-Test Interview

- What three words would you use to describe your experience on this site?
- What was the most frustrating part of completing these tasks?
- If you could change one thing about the homepage, what would it be?
- On a scale of 1-5, how likely are you to return to this site to find information in the future?