The concept of ‘biodiversity conservation’ includes diverse notions of what part of ‘nature’ one is trying to conserve. Moreover, the conservation discourse is part of a wider discussion on what kind of world we want for both humans and nature. Over the past few decades, debates have erupted on both fronts: what nature is worth saving and how to link concerns for nature with concerns for larger societal well-being. But proposals such as the Global Deal for Nature ([www.globaldealfornature.org](https://www.globaldealfornature.org/about/)) articulated by Dinerstein and others suggest that mainstream conservation thinking has not changed much. I argue that acknowledging multiple values about conservation and about society, rejecting the biocentric high horse, pragmatic pluralism and simplistic ‘win–win’ arguments, and embracing a broader set of societal concerns is a more tenable approach towards achieving a balanced society–nature relationship.