



REVIEW ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism*

Making nature legible to industry: An ecolinguistic analysis of salience, erasure, and environmental value in Aramco's 2024 Arabic sustainability discourse

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ABSTRACT

Environmental reporting makes ecological life visible through categories that an industrial organization can govern. Visibility, however, is selective. Species, habitats, water, air, waste, and spills may appear as living particulars, aggregate indicators, or passive recipients of corporate action. This article offers an ecolinguistic analysis of Saudi Aramco's Arabic Sustainability Report 2024 and the environmental-impact page of its Arabic Annual Report 2024. The corpus contains 16,147 raw tokens and 14,871 cleaned tokens, arranged in 97 prose blocks and 598 clause units. Close reading examines salience, erasure, abstraction, evaluation, anthropocentrism, quantification, and the grammar of care and damage. Lexical scans identify a marked imbalance: corporate and industrial actors are named far more often than individual living beings, while measurement terms are unusually dense. Yet the discourse is not uniformly ecologically thin. Named birds, plants, coral, wetlands, and the Nubian ibex interrupt abstraction and create moments of ecological presence. The dominant pattern is a managed ecology in which nature becomes habitat area, water volume, emission level, recycling rate, or "net positive impact." Quantification supports accountability by exposing year-on-year performance and adverse events, but it also makes unlike lives and places commensurable. The report's mitigation hierarchy recognizes avoidance before restoration and offsetting; nevertheless, corporate grammar places the company as the enduring actor and ecosystems as objects of avoidance, repair, and compensation. Industrial legibility is ethically ambivalent: it can direct attention toward protection while narrowing value to what can be measured, managed, or connected to operations.

KEYWORDS: ecolinguistics, environmental discourse, salience, erasure, biodiversity, quantification, Saudi Aramco, Arabic sustainability reporting

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1. Introduction

Industry cannot manage what it cannot name, map, count, or compare. Environmental reports therefore perform an act of translation. Coral reefs become restoration areas, groundwater becomes withdrawal volume, air becomes a medium carrying regulated compounds, biodiversity becomes an indicator, and a spill becomes a number of incidents and barrels. Translation is indispensable to environmental governance. It is also consequential. The categories that make nature legible to an organization determine which relations can be seen and which remain outside the report's field of attention.

Saudi Aramco's Arabic Sustainability Report 2024 provides a rich case. Its environmental section discusses biodiversity, protected habitats, geological outcrops, air emissions, oil spills, water, wastewater, product stewardship, waste, and circular-economy practices. It names particular places and species, discloses several adverse outcomes, and supplies comparative measurements. At the same time, it speaks from the institutional perspective of a large energy and chemicals company. Nature usually enters the sentence where it intersects with operations, standards, risk, restoration, resource efficiency, or community benefit.

An ecolinguistic approach asks how this perspective is built into language. Ecolinguistics does not merely collect words about the environment. It evaluates patterns of discourse according to an explicit ecological philosophy and considers whether those patterns support or undermine the systems on which life depends (Alexander & Stibbe, 2014; Stibbe, 2015). Three concepts are particularly useful here. **Salience** concerns how strongly a participant is brought into attention. **Erasure** concerns what is absent, backgrounded, generalized, or linguistically reduced. **Evaluation** concerns the positive and negative values attached to participants and processes. These operate alongside abstraction, agency, quantification, and anthropocentrism.

The central challenge is to avoid two opposite errors. One is to celebrate any mention of biodiversity as sufficient ecological attention. The other is to treat measurement itself as an act of domination and therefore overlook its accountability value. A report that discloses the number and volume of spills is more open to scrutiny than one that substitutes vague assurance. A habitat-area indicator can direct resources toward protection. Yet numbers also compress differences: thirty-four barrels say nothing by themselves about toxicity, season, currents, exposed species, or recovery time. The same device can illuminate and erase.

This article asks four questions. First, which nonhuman beings, ecological systems, and material media become salient in Aramco's 2024 Arabic environmental discourse? Second, which grammatical and lexical choices erase or background ecological agency, vulnerability, and intrinsic value? Third, how does quantification make nature commensurable with industrial management? Fourth, what environmental ethic is implied by the report's recurrent evaluations of protection, efficiency, resources, impact, and value?

The argument is that the reports construct a **managed ecology**. The company is a persistent actor that avoids, monitors, reduces, restores, protects, recycles, and compensates. Ecological entities are visible mainly as operational settings, measured stocks and flows, protected objects, or beneficiaries of management. This formation is not simply anthropocentric in the sense of ignoring nonhuman life. Specific species and habitats sometimes become vivid, and the mitigation hierarchy gives avoidance priority over repair. The deeper anthropocentrism lies in narrative control: nature seldom appears as an agent with trajectories independent of the company, and value is most secure when it can be attached to a service, metric, standard, or operational outcome.

The study contributes to ecolinguistics by examining original Arabic corporate reporting, a domain still underrepresented in the field. It also contributes to sustainability-report research by showing that biodiversity disclosure is not only a matter of topic coverage. The form of presence matters. Naming, agency, number, and scale decide whether nature appears as a community of living beings, an administrative object, or both.

2. Ecolinguistics and the Corporate Ordering of Nature

2.1 From environmental topic to ecological judgment

Alexander and Stibbe (2014) distinguish analysis of environmental discourse from ecological analysis of discourse. The first may study texts that discuss nature; the second asks how any discourse participates in ecological relations. Corporate sustainability reporting invites both. Its topic is explicitly environmental, but its deeper stories concern growth, control, value, responsibility, and the human place within living systems.

Stibbe (2015) describes recurrent "stories we live by," including ideologies, frames, metaphors,

evaluations, identities, convictions, erasure, and salience. These are not stories only in the sense of narratives with characters and events. They are patterned assumptions that make certain ways of speaking feel ordinary. In a corporate environmental report, a resource story may treat water as an input whose efficient allocation ensures continuity. A stewardship story may give the company a responsible identity. A progress story may arrange indicators as movement from worse to better. A service story may value ecosystems through what they provide.

Ecolinguistic judgment requires an ecosophy: an explicit account of what counts as beneficial or destructive. The ecosophy used here is modest but demanding. Flourishing depends on the continued integrity and diversity of ecological communities; humans are participants in, not masters outside, those communities; preventable harm should be avoided before it is repaired or compensated; and the value of living beings is not exhausted by their utility to production. This standpoint does not deny human needs or the usefulness of measurement. It asks whether discourse keeps ecological limits, relationships, and nonhuman vulnerability visible.

The field encompasses varied traditions rather than a single method, from language ecology to critical and positive analyses of environmental meaning (Fill & Penz, 2017). The present study uses that plurality selectively: it combines close linguistic attention with an openly stated ecological judgment rather than treating every mention of sustainability as beneficial in advance.

2.2 Salience, naming, and the scale of attention

Salience is produced through linguistic form and textual placement. A named species is more individuated than “biodiversity.” An active participant is more present than a passive object. A concrete description of a wetland, bird population, or coral condition is more imaginable than an index. Headings, photographs, repetition, and quantified comparisons can also raise salience.

Corporate reports move continually between scales. “The environment” is extremely broad; “ecosystem services” identifies functions but not particular communities; “wetlands” denotes a habitat class; “Lake Yellow” denotes a place; “Nubian ibex” denotes a species; an individual animal is almost never present. Each move upward in abstraction makes comparison and governance easier. Each move may also remove sensory, temporal, and ethical detail.

The analytical question is therefore not whether abstraction occurs—it is unavoidable—but whether the report returns from abstraction to living particulars. A biodiversity percentage can be accompanied by species names, habitat condition, threats, and ecological time. Without such return, the indicator risks becoming a free-standing sign of performance.

2.3 Erasure and the grammar of affected nature

Erasure is not limited to complete absence. Stibbe (2015) describes degrees of backgrounding, distortion, and masking. A report may mention a forest while erasing the creatures within it; mention a spill while erasing the path of exposure; mention restoration while erasing the time needed for ecological recovery. Nominalizations such as “impact,” “discharge,” and “compensation” can package relationships as objects. Passive constructions can suppress the actor who caused a change.

Corporate environmental discourse has a characteristic agency pattern. The company acts upon nature: it protects habitats, monitors water, restores land, and reduces emissions. This grammar gives responsibility a visible agent. Yet it can also cast nature as passive matter awaiting corporate care. Ecological agency—migration, regeneration, predation, adaptation, bleaching, mortality, seasonal flow—receives less space because it is harder to integrate into managerial control.

Erasure may also occur through the boundary of a metric. A disclosure can be accurate within its stated perimeter while leaving out supply-chain impacts, downstream use, cumulative exposure, or unmeasured species. Critical analysis should specify the boundary rather than accuse the number of falsehood. The ethical issue is what the boundary permits readers to forget.

2.4 Quantification, commensuration, and accountability

Numbers carry unusual authority in sustainability reporting. They facilitate comparison across years and sites,

make targets auditable, and allow managers to allocate resources. Power (2004) argues that measurement systems do not merely record activity; they shape it by defining what can be controlled. Espeland and Stevens (1998) call the transformation of different qualities into a common metric “commensuration.” Such transformation simplifies decision-making but changes the meaning of what is compared.

Biodiversity illustrates the tension. A “net positive impact” indicator translates protected or restored area into a percentage relative to operational land. This may encourage conservation. It may also suggest that gains in one place can compensate for losses in another, even when ecosystems are not interchangeable. Biodiversity-offset research repeatedly warns that equivalence is difficult because habitats differ in composition, location, maturity, and cultural meaning (Bull et al., 2013; Sullivan & Hannis, 2015).

Corporate biodiversity studies identify a related reporting problem. Boiral (2016) finds that biodiversity reports can emphasize favorable initiatives while marginalizing unresolved impacts. Boiral and Heras-Saizarbitoria (2017) show that stakeholder involvement varies in purpose and depth. Cuckston (2013) demonstrates how accounting calculations can bring conservation into financial decisions while also restructuring nature as a calculable object. Milne and Gray (2013) argue that corporate sustainability frameworks risk displacing ecology itself.

Accountability scholarship has also sought forms of reporting that make extinction visible rather than treating species loss as an externality (Atkins & Maroun, 2018). Certifiable standards can institutionalize biodiversity management, while employee involvement can widen the organizational base of implementation (Boiral et al., 2018, 2019). These possibilities do not remove the need to examine who sets the categories and which harms remain outside them.

The present analysis treats quantification as ambivalent. It asks what a number reveals, what equivalence it assumes, and what qualitative context it needs. A disclosed adverse figure is not dismissed because it is numerical; it is read as a partial ecological account.

2.5 Environmental value: service, resource, and more-than-use

The language of ecosystem services has helped make ecological degradation visible to institutions by showing that economies depend on functioning systems. The valuation literature traces a movement from recognition of ecological functions toward markets and payment schemes (Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2010). Costanza et al. (1997) famously estimated the economic value of global ecosystem services, while Daily et al. (2009) called for incorporating them into decisions. The later “nature’s contributions to people” framework sought to accommodate plural values and knowledge systems rather than a single economic register (Pascual et al., 2017). The risk arises when service value becomes the only available value. A wetland may filter water, support birds, hold local memory, sustain food webs, and exist beyond any recorded benefit to a company. Crist’s (2004) critique of the social construction of nature insists that human naming should not be confused with the existence and agency of the nonhuman world. An ecolinguistic analysis therefore attends to whether corporate discourse allows value that is not immediately instrumental.

3. Corpus and Method

3.1 Page-bounded corpus

The corpus was drawn from two official Arabic documents published by Saudi Arabian Oil Company: the Sustainability Report 2024 and the Annual Report 2024 (Aramco, 2025a, 2025b). The sustainability subcorpus includes printed pages 80–95 and 120–133. Pages 80–95 contain the section on minimizing environmental impact: biodiversity and ecosystem services, local environmental impact, air emissions, oil spills, water and wastewater, product stewardship, waste, and circular economy. Pages 120–127 introduce sustainability data and indicators; pages 128–133 provide definitions relevant to environmental categories and measurement. The annual-report subcorpus consists of printed page 65, the concise environmental-impact account within the annual sustainability section. This page was included to examine how a detailed ecological narrative is compressed for a more financially and strategically oriented report. It was not expanded to the neighboring societal-value page.

The sustainability selections produced 15,497 raw tokens and 14,318 cleaned tokens. The annual page produced 650 raw and 553 cleaned tokens. The combined corpus contains 16,147 raw tokens and 14,871

cleaned tokens, distributed across 97 layout-defined prose blocks and 598 clause units. Text was extracted on 15 August 2026 from the official archived PDFs.

Cleaning removed repeated navigation lines, footers, isolated page numbers, bidirectional controls, URLs, leader lines, and rows dominated by numbers or punctuation. Because extracted tables did not preserve reliable column order, their numerical rows were excluded from the cleaned prose counts. Complete headings, captions, and statements in diagrams were retained when interpretable. The published values discussed in the analysis were checked visually on the page.

3.2 Analytical dimensions

The reading used seven connected dimensions:

1. **Salience:** specificity of naming, grammatical activation, repetition, textual prominence, and sensory or place detail.
2. **Erasure:** omission, generic reference, passive causation, nominalization, missing ecological relations, and boundary effects.
3. **Abstraction:** movement from beings and places to classes, systems, indicators, impacts, or resources.
4. **Evaluation:** positive and negative appraisal attached to ecological or industrial actors.
5. **Anthropocentrism:** prioritization of human, corporate, or economic utility over nonhuman flourishing.
6. **Quantification:** transformation of ecological qualities into counts, rates, areas, volumes, and comparative indicators.
7. **Agency:** allocation of action among the company, technologies, people, organisms, ecological processes, and pollutants.

These dimensions were applied to complete passages, not isolated words. “Resource,” for example, was not automatically coded as destructive; its function depended on whether the passage also recognized scarcity, regeneration, ecological dependence, or intrinsic value. Likewise, passive voice was treated as erasure only when it materially obscured causation.

3.3 Retrieval scans and close reading

Declared lexical scans located recurrent clusters. Terms for living beings returned 74 matches; ecological collectives such as biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats, and protected areas returned 78; water, air, soil, sea, coast, and desert returned 151. By comparison, corporate and industrial actors returned 375 matches. Measurement terms—ratio, rate, area, number, indicator, tonnage, and related forms—returned 216.

The care-and-repair list returned 73 matches, including protection, restoration, conservation, avoidance, and compensation. The damage-and-pollution list returned 78, including pollution, spills, discharges, environmental impacts, and emissions. Economic-value terms returned 41. These counts are lexical signals, not semantic annotations: patterns overlap, and a single occurrence may be critical, neutral, or affirmative in context. Their purpose was to identify passages where ecological presence and managerial language intersected. Close reading then moved between three scales: the clause, the local page, and the subcorpus. Representative passages were checked against the PDF and Romanized in an IJMES-style scheme. Long vowels, emphatic consonants, hamza, and ‘ayn are marked; case endings absent from the unvocalized source are not reconstructed. Every example includes an English translation and a printed-page locator. No Arabic script is reproduced.

This is a reflexive qualitative analysis, not a multi-rater content analysis. No intercoder statistic is claimed. Auditability is provided through fixed boundaries, transparent cleaning, declared retrieval lists, category definitions, and representative evidence.

4. Findings

4.1 Nature enters as an operational setting

The environmental section begins with scale and duration. The company has operated for more than nine decades across the Kingdom’s diverse environments, including deserts, mountains, coasts, and marine areas. The sentence makes landscape visible but subordinates it to corporate history:

‘Alā madār akthar min tis‘at ‘uqūd, tumārisu al-sharika a‘mālahā ḍimna al-bī‘āt al-mutanawwi‘a li-al-Mamlaka al-‘Arabiyya al-Su‘ūdiyya allatī tashmalu al-ṣaḥārā al-shāsi‘a wa-al-manāṭiq al-jabaliyya wa-al-sāḥiliyya wa-al-bī‘āt al-baḥriyya.

“For more than nine decades, the company has operated within the diverse environments of Saudi Arabia, including vast deserts, mountain and coastal areas, and marine environments.” (SR, pp. 80–81, biodiversity overview)

The locative phrase “within the diverse environments” acknowledges that industry is embedded in place. Yet the main actor is the company and the main process is operation. Deserts, mountains, coasts, and seas form the circumstance of that process. They are present, but as settings through which corporate continuity extends. The passage gains ecological density when it moves to particular habitats and species. Wetlands, coral reefs, birds, plants, and the Nubian ibex enter subsequent pages. This oscillation between operational setting and living place is characteristic of the report. The broad opening establishes corporate reach; the particulars provide evidence of stewardship.

Salience is uneven within the list. “Vast deserts” receive a vivid adjective but few desert organisms are named in the selected pages. Marine environments receive more sustained attention through coral research and spill response. Mountains become salient through the Asir reserve and reintroduction potential. The pattern reflects reporting projects rather than an ecological inventory. What receives a program receives language.

4.2 The mitigation hierarchy: ethical order and managerial control

The biodiversity page presents a four-stage mitigation hierarchy: avoid, minimize, restore, and offset. Its first statement gives avoidance priority:

Tatajannabu al-sharika al-‘amal fī al-mawā’il al-ṭabī‘iyya ‘āliyat al-jawda.

“The company avoids operating in high-quality natural habitats.” (SR, pp. 80–81, biodiversity mitigation hierarchy)

This ordering accords with the ecosophy adopted here: preventing damage is preferable to repairing it. The next stages acknowledge residual impacts rather than implying that every harm can be prevented. The final stage states that the company compensates for impacts that cannot be avoided, minimized, or restored.

The hierarchy is ethically significant because it resists the idea that offsetting is immediately equivalent to intact habitat. Yet its grammar remains managerial. The company is the actor at every stage; habitats and impacts are objects. Ecological systems do not act, resist, recover slowly, or fail to recover. The diagram depicts a sequence of corporate interventions, not a negotiation with living complexity.

The phrase “high-quality natural habitats” also imports a threshold. Avoidance applies to habitats already classified as high quality. The text does not explain here who determines quality, which indicators are used, or how degraded but recoverable habitats are treated. Classification is necessary for planning, but it can create a linguistic outside: places below the threshold may appear more available for intervention.

Offset language makes commensuration explicit. An “impact” becomes something that can be compensated after preceding options have been exhausted. Bull et al. (2013) emphasize that offset success depends on additionality, equivalence, permanence, and implementation. The report’s hierarchy names the correct order, but the page-level wording cannot show whether a particular compensation reproduces ecological relations. A critical reading should therefore preserve the hierarchy’s ethical merit while refusing to treat its final category as proof of equivalence.

4.3 Moments of ecological presence

The report is most ecologically vivid when it names places, counts species, and describes habitat functions together. The account of protected wetlands notes the formal designation of twenty areas covering 130.9 square kilometers. It identifies a residential lake in Dhahran where 230 bird species have been recorded, including globally threatened species, and describes another lake as internationally important habitat and a candidate key

biodiversity area.

This passage does more than display a large number. The bird count is connected to threat status and place. Individual birds remain aggregated, but the ecological community acquires specificity. The name of the lake interrupts the generic category “protected area,” and the reference to global threat connects local management to wider species trajectories.

The Asir account similarly names a 31-square-kilometer reserve, its elevation, plant richness, and the possibility of reintroducing the Nubian ibex:

Wa-tazkharu al-maḥmiyya bi-tanawwu‘ nabāṭi hā’il ... wa-hiya tuwaffiru mawṭinan wā’idan li-i‘ādat tawṭin al-wa’l al-Nūbī fī al-mantiqa.

“The reserve is rich in extensive plant diversity ... and provides promising habitat for the reintroduction of the Nubian ibex in the region.” (SR, pp. 82–83, habitat restoration and protection)

Here the reserve, not the company, is grammatical actor: it “abounds” and “provides.” Ecological agency briefly becomes visible. The phrase “promising habitat” evaluates the place by its capacity to sustain a species, not by direct industrial utility. This is one of the report’s least anthropocentric moments.

Coral passages also bring nonhuman processes into view through bleaching, biology, coastal systems, and research. Yet even vivid examples remain program-centered. Coral becomes salient because a partnership studies it, a community program teaches it, or a restoration initiative acts upon it. The report rarely follows an organism beyond the boundary of the initiative. Ecological presence is real but institutionally framed.

4.4 Air, water, and the hierarchy of beneficiaries

Air-emissions prose combines causal clarity with a human-first beneficiary order. The report states that nitrogen oxides arise mainly from combustion of hydrocarbon fuel used for electricity generation and heating in facilities. This is a relatively direct causal construction. It then describes monitoring and mitigation:

Turāqibu Arāmku al-Su‘ūdiyya inbi‘āthātihā al-jawwiyya wa-tunaffidhu ‘inda al-ḍarūra tadābīr li-al-ḥadd min ta‘thīrihā ‘alā al-quwā al-‘āmila wa-al-mujtama‘āt al-maḥalliyya wa-al-bī’a.

“Saudi Aramco monitors its air emissions and, where necessary, implements measures to limit their effects on the workforce, local communities, and the environment.” (SR, pp. 84–85, air emissions)

The possessive “its emissions” keeps responsibility visible, and material verbs give the company duties. The ordered list places workers first, communities second, and “the environment” last. This does not prove that ecological effects matter less in practice, but it reveals the evaluative hierarchy of the sentence. Nonhuman recipients are aggregated in the broadest possible term.

Water is made salient by scarcity and operational dependence. The report says the company has long recognized water’s value because many operations occur in an extremely arid environment. “Value” is immediately linked to scarcity and industrial location. Conservation measures include alternative supplies, efficiency, wastewater reuse, and reduced losses. The narrative is responsible but primarily resource-oriented: water must be conserved so that operations and communities remain viable.

Another passage states that the company generates large quantities of wastewater and recognizes the importance of managing and treating it responsibly before returning it to the environment. The phrase “returning it” implies a cycle, but “the environment” again functions as a generalized receiving body. The report does not, in that sentence, name the water body, salinity, temperature, chemical load, or organisms exposed. Standards and treatment processes substitute for place-specific ecological description.

This abstraction is understandable in a group-level report, yet it has ethical effects. Water becomes a volume to withdraw, use, treat, reuse, discharge, and measure. Its movement through aquifers, soils, plants, microorganisms, fisheries, and households is only partially visible. The account makes corporate water governance legible while erasing much of the hydrological community.

4.5 Adverse events: disclosure, containment, and the missing aftermath

The oil-spill section contains an important admission. It reports seven incidents, a total release of thirty-four barrels, and the share occurring offshore. It also states that all were contained and recovered:

Wa-‘alā al-ragħm min taṭallu‘inā li-taḥqīq hadaf man‘ al-insikābāt nihā’iyyan, fa-qad waqa‘at li-al-asaf sab‘ ḥawādith insikāb naftī asfarat ‘an tasarrub mā majmū‘uhu 34 barmīlan.

“Despite our aspiration to prevent spills entirely, seven oil-spill incidents unfortunately occurred, releasing a total of thirty-four barrels.” (SR, pp. 84–85, oil spills)

The clause is notable for retaining the adverse event, quantity, and failed aspiration. The affective adverb “unfortunately” evaluates the outcome negatively. Yet agency is divided. Spills “occurred,” and the incidents “resulted in” leakage. The corporate actor returns in the response: teams contained and recovered the releases. Causation is less personalized than remediation.

Containment closes the event administratively. Once the released material is recovered, the narrative can move to improved detection and response. Ecological aftermath is not equally salient. The text does not specify which organisms or habitats were exposed, whether monitoring continued, or how recovery was determined. Absence does not establish that no assessment occurred; it shows that the report’s public account defines the event primarily through volume and control.

The comparison with the previous year further turns spills into performance. A lower number and volume become improvement, while the remaining incidents are exceptions within a downward trend. Comparative disclosure is valuable because it resists vague self-congratulation. Still, an ecolinguistic reading asks whether a low aggregate volume could conceal a high local impact. Ecological severity is not always proportional to quantity.

4.6 Circularity and the industrial afterlife of materials

The circular-economy section gives waste a second life. Used pipe, drilling mud, spent oil, tires, plastics, catalysts, wastewater, and surplus material are described as reused, recycled, transferred, or converted into inputs. The vocabulary opposes linear disposal and makes material flows visible. It also aligns environmental benefit with operational efficiency and financial saving.

This is a productive story when it prevents extraction and disposal. The report supplies concrete quantities, including reused material and recycled drilling mud. Yet circularity can become an abstraction if movement is equated with harmlessness. A material may circulate through energy-intensive processing, lose quality, carry contaminants, or postpone final disposal. The report’s examples vary, and the category “circular” should not erase those differences.

The strongest evaluative words in the section attach to innovation, efficiency, reliability, and savings. Ecological beneficiaries are often inferred: less waste, lower resource demand, and reduced pollution. Roads made with tire-derived material are praised for durability and noise reduction, and the report adds a claim about lower microplastic pollution in road dust. Such multi-benefit narration strengthens legitimacy. It would be ecologically richer if lifecycle boundaries, testing duration, and unintended trade-offs were equally prominent.

The circularity diagram depicts materials, supply chains, design, renewable energy, and digital techniques as parts of a managed loop. Like the mitigation hierarchy, the visual order is compelling because it converts complexity into a sequence of interventions. The company becomes the designer of material afterlives. What remains less visible is the living world through which residual substances continue to move.

4.7 “Net positive impact” and the problem of equivalence

The biodiversity indicator called “net positive impact” is the clearest example of industrial legibility. It relates the total area of biodiversity protected areas to the area where the company operates and reports a percentage. The measure makes conservation performance comparable across years and gives protected land organizational weight. Without a metric, habitat initiatives could remain anecdotal.

The phrase nevertheless contains three compressions. “Impact” combines heterogeneous ecological changes. “Net” permits gains and losses to be balanced. “Positive” offers an evaluative conclusion. The

calculation uses area, which is transparent but insensitive to many qualities: habitat condition, connectivity, rarity, species composition, time since restoration, and permanence.

Commensuration is most consequential when the numerator and denominator are treated as exchangeable space. A protected area does not necessarily compensate for disturbance elsewhere simply because the areas can be divided. Sullivan and Hannis (2015) show that offset debates are struggles over the frames through which losses and gains become comparable. The report's indicator should therefore be read as an administrative ratio, not a complete ecological verdict.

The data pages partly mitigate this risk by defining scope and by placing the ratio beside narrative examples. Named wetlands, birds, plants, and restoration projects give content to the area figure. Yet the label "net positive impact" remains stronger than the underlying measure warrants. A more cautious label would identify exactly what is calculated—protected-area coverage relative to operational area—while leaving ecological positivity to a broader assessment.

4.8 The annual report's compressed ecology

The annual report condenses the environmental account into a single page. Biodiversity, water, waste, air, spills, and circularity appear chiefly through selected indicators and achievements. Compression increases the density of managerial nouns and numbers. Species and place detail recede, while the four-focus-area structure remains. This genre difference matters. A reader of the annual report encounters environmental performance as a strategic component beside financial and operational results. A reader of the sustainability report encounters case narratives and ecological particulars. Neither document is simply more truthful. Each creates a different scale of attention. The shorter form favors commensurable performance; the longer form permits moments of ecological presence.

The contrast suggests that salience depends partly on document architecture. If biodiversity appears only in a specialized report, financial audiences may encounter it chiefly as a summarized indicator. Integrating a small number of place- and species-specific outcomes into the annual report could reduce this separation without overwhelming the genre.

4.9 The glossary and the authority to define

The data section ends with a glossary that defines climate, emissions, methane, nitrogen oxides, carbon intensity, protected-area categories, and other terms. A glossary appears neutral because it explains vocabulary rather than arguing for a policy. Ecolinguistically, however, definition is a strong form of framing. It decides what belongs inside a category and which relations readers need in order to understand it.

Definitions of pollutants are among the most ecologically informative. Nitrogen oxides are connected to vehicle exhaust and power generation, reduced visibility, photochemical smog, health consequences, and their classification as pollutants. The entry restores a causal and material chain that can disappear when the report presents only an emissions total. Methane is identified as a hydrocarbon greenhouse gas with greater warming potential than carbon dioxide over the stated comparison. These definitions make invisible gases conceptually salient.

Other entries narrow attention. Upstream carbon intensity is defined as greenhouse-gas emissions per barrel of oil equivalent. The ratio is clear and operationally useful, but its denominator is production. A more efficient barrel appears environmentally better even though the definition says nothing about aggregate output or downstream combustion. The glossary thus reveals the report's scale of responsibility in miniature: operational efficiency is precisely defined; wider product-system effects are not part of that indicator.

The definition of important bird and biodiversity areas distinguishes a bird-focused subset from broader key biodiversity areas and identifies the organizations through which those places are recognized. This is a welcome instance of ecological differentiation. Birds are not treated as interchangeable with all biodiversity, and institutional custodianship is named. Yet the category still enters through expert classification. Local knowledge, seasonal use, and relations that fall outside formal designation remain less visible.

Glossary entries also give corporate language the authority of settled meaning. Readers may forget that categories such as "net positive," "resource," "impact," or "offset" are debated. A useful reporting practice would identify when a definition is operational, regulatory, or contested. The phrase "for purposes of this

report” can be ethically valuable because it prevents a company-specific measure from masquerading as an ecological universal.

The glossary therefore performs two opposed functions. It reduces erasure by explaining technical terms and causal effects. It also stabilizes a managerial ontology in which ecological processes are organized around inventories, operational boundaries, and comparable indicators. Its significance lies not at the edge of the report but at the center of how the report knows nature.

5. Discussion: The Ambivalence of Industrial Legibility

The corpus does not erase nature wholesale. It names habitats, species, water scarcity, emissions, spills, and waste. It discloses adverse figures and places avoidance before restoration and offsetting. These features matter. They create handles for scrutiny and can direct organizational attention toward ecological protection.

At the same time, the report’s dominant ecological subject is the company. Corporate and industrial actor terms substantially outnumber references to living beings in the declared lexical scans. The company sees, values, protects, measures, treats, restores, and compensates. Nature appears as the setting, object, medium, resource, or beneficiary of those processes. This asymmetry constructs an identity of stewardship but grants little narrative autonomy to ecological systems.

The concept of managed ecology captures the combination. Nature is not denied; it is rendered governable through standards, hierarchies, dashboards, certifications, areas, volumes, and rates. The vocabulary of care and the vocabulary of control are intertwined. Protection is accomplished through management, and value becomes administratively durable when it can be measured.

This arrangement resonates with wider critiques of neoliberal conservation, in which protection is increasingly organized through market-compatible instruments, partnerships, and calculable exchanges (Büscher et al., 2012; Castree, 2008). The comparison should not flatten every corporate conservation project into a market transaction. It highlights a recurring institutional tendency: ecological value gains authority when translated into a form compatible with organizational control.

This formation carries two dangers. The first is **metric closure**: the indicator comes to stand for the ecological relation it only partially describes. A lower discharge volume, higher protected-area ratio, or greater recycling rate can close the story before place-specific consequences are known. The second is **managerial centrality**: because the company is the principal actor in both harm reduction and care, ecological futures appear dependent on corporate competence rather than on limits to industrial intervention.

There are also resources for a more ecological story within the report itself. The mitigation hierarchy privileges avoidance. The Asir reserve passage activates habitat as provider and makes a species visible. Wetland and coral accounts recognize place, threat, and biological relation. Spill disclosure acknowledges a failed aspiration. These passages could become more than illustrative exceptions if connected systematically to governance and metrics.

An ecologically fuller report would not abandon numbers. It would place numbers inside narratives of relation. Area measures could be accompanied by condition, connectivity, and permanence. Water volumes could identify basin context and ecological recipients. Spill reporting could describe exposure, monitoring duration, and recovery criteria. Circularity claims could state lifecycle boundaries. Such additions would make corporate management more, not less, accountable.

The lexical distribution helps clarify why these additions matter. The 375 matches for corporate and industrial actors do not simply indicate that the report is about a company. They show that agency is continually refreshed through naming, while the 74 matches for living beings are concentrated in a smaller number of case passages. Corporate presence is continuous; ecological presence is episodic. Measurement terms, at 216 matches, connect the two by turning selected ecological features into objects the continuous actor can monitor. This does not mean that every nonhuman participant should be grammatically active. Water does not “decide,” and an emissions inventory requires technical nouns. The imbalance becomes ethically significant when the only available plot is corporate intervention. Ecological processes could be represented without romantic personification: wetlands retain water, coral colonies bleach under thermal stress, plant communities regenerate over time, contaminants travel through currents, and migratory birds depend on connected sites. Such clauses give readers causal relations that are neither human-centered nor fanciful.

The managed ecology also has a spatial politics. Sites receive attention when they fall within operational control, project partnerships, or protected-area programs. Ecological relations cross those borders. Air pollutants travel; marine releases move; migratory species connect distant habitats; aquifers ignore facility boundaries. A corporate report cannot map every external relation, but it can state where its governance perimeter diverges from ecological space. Boundary transparency would turn an apparent limitation into a substantive disclosure. Finally, the discourse repeatedly joins ecological improvement to innovation and efficiency. This alignment can mobilize capital and technical expertise. It can also make protective action vulnerable when it lacks a financial or operational co-benefit. A plural account of value would retain projects whose justification is simply that a species, habitat, or ecological process should continue, even where the benefit to production is indirect or unpriced.

6. Implications for Reporting and Research

For reporting practice, four principles follow. First, **name the living participants**. A small number of representative species or ecological communities can prevent “biodiversity” from becoming an empty aggregate, provided they are not used as decorative mascots. Second, **retain causal agency in adverse events**. Where investigation establishes a cause, the report should connect the process, decision, or failure to the impact rather than allowing the event merely to “occur.”

Third, **label metrics narrowly**. An area ratio should not be named as a comprehensive ecological outcome unless it measures condition and additionality as well as extent. Fourth, **report ecological time**. Restoration, contamination, and population recovery unfold over periods that do not fit neatly into an annual cycle. Status updates should distinguish a completed corporate intervention from a recovered ecosystem.

For researchers, the findings caution against coding environmental disclosure only by sentence count. A page can mention nature frequently while keeping it abstract and passive. Conversely, one well-located description can create substantial ecological salience. Future studies should combine topic coverage with grammatical agency, naming specificity, metric boundaries, and the ordering of beneficiaries.

A further implication concerns assurance. External assurance can verify that an indicator was calculated according to a stated method. It cannot by itself establish that the indicator captures the ecological quality suggested by its label. Assurance of a protected-area ratio is not assurance of “positive” biodiversity impact unless condition, additionality, leakage, and permanence are within the assured proposition. Reviewers should therefore read the assurance boundary beside the semantic breadth of the claim.

Reporting teams could use a paired-page discipline: every major environmental metric should be accompanied by one short account of ecological mechanism and one account of limitation. The first would explain what changed in the living or material system; the second would state what the measure does not capture. This would preserve comparability while resisting metric closure.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The study examines selected pages from one year and one organization. It does not assess field conditions, verify the ecological effectiveness of projects, or infer deliberate concealment from textual absence. The annual-report comparison is limited to a single environmental page. PDF extraction required the exclusion of scrambled table rows, though published figures used in analysis were checked visually.

The Romanization makes the evidence accessible without Arabic script, but it cannot reproduce every graphic or typographic feature of the source. A multimodal study could examine photographs, color, chart scale, and page composition. Longitudinal research could test whether species, habitats, and adverse events retain salience over time. Comparative work could ask whether national oil companies, investor-owned firms, and conservation organizations construct different forms of ecological agency.

Reception research would add another necessary dimension. A metric that appears reductive to an ecolinguist may be useful to a conservation practitioner who needs an internal budget, while a locally vivid case study may appear tokenistic to a community living with cumulative exposure. Interviews and participatory reading could show which forms of naming and evidence create trust, which exclusions are noticed, and which ecological relationships report users want restored. Such work would also test the assumption that more detail always produces greater salience; excessive technical density can itself bury a living participant. The normative

aim is not maximal description but proportionate attention: enough specificity to understand who or what is affected, enough causal structure to allocate responsibility, and enough humility to show where corporate knowledge ends.

8. Conclusion

Aramco's 2024 Arabic environmental discourse makes nature visible in a form industry can act upon. Habitats become areas, water becomes volume, emissions become rates, waste becomes recoverable material, and biodiversity becomes a ratio. This translation supports governance and exposes some performance to comparison. It also narrows the field of value.

The report contains meaningful countercurrents. Wetlands, birds, plants, coral, and the Nubian ibex sometimes emerge from abstraction. Avoidance precedes compensation. Spills are counted and a failure to reach zero is acknowledged. Yet the company remains the enduring protagonist, while ecological systems usually occupy the grammar of setting, object, or beneficiary.

Industrial legibility is therefore ethically ambivalent. It can make protection possible and erasure respectable. The difference depends on whether measurement remains connected to living particulars, causal responsibility, ecological time, and values beyond utility. A stronger environmental account would not speak less about management. It would allow the more-than-human world to appear not only as something managed, but as a set of communities whose continued flourishing defines the limits and meaning of industrial success.

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Declarations

Data availability: The article analyses public institutional webpages. The source register and representative Romanized excerpts are included. A reusable corpus should be archived only after checking institutional copyright, webpage changes, and journal data-sharing requirements.

Ethics: The corpus contains no private or personal data. Institutional texts are quoted briefly for scholarly analysis.

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