

KE@ICCS Brief Science

How conservation science can help progress corporate biodiversity accounting

Prue Addison, October 2017



Knowledge Exchange @



Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science

Businesses are beginning to account for their impacts and dependencies on nature, through approaches like natural capital accounting. Whilst accounting approaches are well developed for some aspects of natural capital, other critical aspects like biodiversity are yet to be fully accounted in business decision-making.

Many business leaders recognize the importance of accounting for biodiversity, but are currently grappling with how to distil and act on information about complex and dynamic natural systems that interact with all levels of their business. They are facing challenges like how to effectively *measure, evaluate and act on biodiversity performance* from site- to corporate-level.

The field of conservation science has emerged as a discipline to address one of the greatest environmental challenges – the continued loss of biodiversity around the globe. There are now decades of research that underpins conservation practice, from the protection of biodiversity (e.g., protected area establishment and threatened species listing), to the conservation of biodiversity (e.g., prioritization and adaptive management of biodiversity areas, balanced with sustainable development), through to trading of nature (e.g., biodiversity offsetting or payments for ecosystem services to balance conservation of biodiversity with sustainable development).

Across this spectrum of conservation practice, conservation scientists have been particularly effective at developing processes and tools that help governments and NGOs effectively *measure, evaluate and act on biodiversity performance*. So the conservation science that can address business challenges already exists, but remains a largely untapped resource in Business and Biodiversity discussions.

Example conservation science approaches along the protect – conserve – trade spectrum:

Protect

[Protected Area Management Effectiveness Evaluation:](#)

to guide and assess ongoing management of protected areas. Includes tools to help develop biodiversity goals and metrics, monitor, evaluate, and report on biodiversity performance.

Conserve

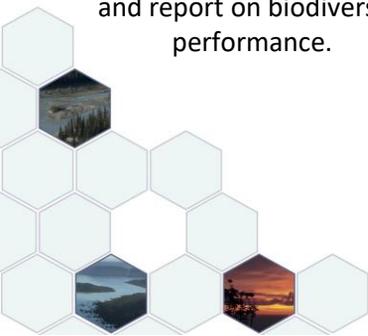
[The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation:](#)

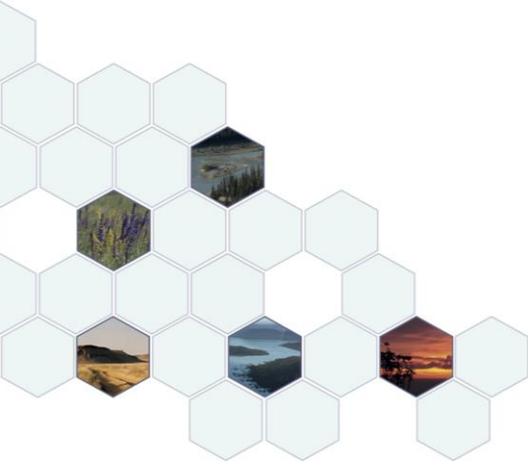
to assist with implementing, monitoring and adaptive management of conservation actions. Includes: models to understand ecosystem interactions; planning tools to trade-off environmental and socio-economic factors, and prioritize areas for action; and, ecosystem monitoring & accounting systems.

Trade

[The Mitigation Hierarchy](#)

to guide the avoidance, minimisation, restoration and offsetting of predicted biodiversity impacts from development. Includes approaches to develop goals like 'no net loss' of biodiversity, and models to predict biodiversity gains and losses from development and mitigation measures.





How the conservation science toolbox can address Business and Biodiversity challenges:

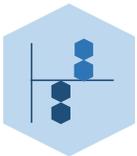
The approaches outlined here, and many more from the conservation science toolbox, can help address the challenges that businesses are grappling with relating to *measuring, evaluating and acting on biodiversity performance*. Just some of the specific challenges that these tools can address include:



Developing corporate biodiversity goals: using science-based approaches to articulate Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Timely corporate biodiversity goals.



Assessing critical corporate threats to biodiversity: using tools to map out business-biodiversity interactions and identify critical threats to biodiversity that businesses are contributing to.



Developing biodiversity metrics: using tools to develop robust and comparable metrics to assess site- to corporate-level corporate biodiversity performance.



Identifying corporate biodiversity actions to address impacts: using predictive tools to identify priority biodiversity actions and determine the magnitude of action to mitigate impacts and achieve corporate biodiversity goals.

Through my Knowledge Exchange fellowship at the University of Oxford, I am here to show how approaches in conservation science can be adapted to become fit-for-purpose business tools. To find out more about how the world of conservation science can be adapted to address your business and biodiversity challenges, and to become involved in my program of business and biodiversity work, please contact me.

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