

1 Will meeting Aichi Target 11 be sufficient to stop extinctions?

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7 *Abstract: International targets for conservation are causing a rapid expansion in the global*
8 *protected area network, without ensuring that benefits to biodiversity follow or providing a*
9 *mechanism to assess them.*

10 The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi Target 11 calls for a substantial
11 expansion in terrestrial and marine Protected Areas (PA) by 2020, but is it enough to
12 conserve species? It is a fallacy that positive biodiversity outcomes naturally flow from
13 increasing the number of PAs and while they can be effective conservation tools (1), many
14 are still failing to halt species decline (2). Yet, simply meeting area targets for the global PA
15 network is dangerously perceived as sufficient to stem the loss of biodiversity.

16 A system to comprehensively and strategically evaluate the tangible benefits of PAs for
17 species conservation – not simply inputs and processes – is essential to underpin decisions
18 from global to local. The conservation community is desperate for targeted, institutionally
19 embedded, and scientifically credible (with controls, counterfactuals, replication, and
20 standard methods) monitoring and evaluation of the conservation effectiveness of PAs
21 worldwide. Such a system will require a large initial investment, and incur ongoing costs, but
22 as long as it doesn't exist, information that can never be recovered is being lost. If
23 strategically implemented, the benefit will far outweigh cost – providing the knowledge to
24 act, and preventing irreversible damage to biodiversity. Can we afford the price of keeping
25 the status quo?

26 The conservation community should demand that biodiversity, not proxies such as area, be
27 explicitly embedded into the realisation of Target 11 beyond 2020. We have the opportunity
28 to influence conservation policy from the bottom-up, ensuring that an adequate monitoring
29 system becomes part of best practices for PAs. Mechanisms already exist to be able to
30 commit funds to this initiative, for example the Strategy for Resource Mobilization of the
31 CBD can help create financial pathways towards this goal. If we fail to act now, we can never
32 know if the c.200,000 PAs worldwide are achieving their conservation mandate (3).

34 REFERENCES

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