

A New Vision for Biodiversity Conservation

IUCN's emerging position on a new (post 2010) Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity

Introduction

1. The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the IUCN's emerging position on a new (post 2010) Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity. SWT is the largest environmental non-Governmental body in Scotland representing all aspects of our natural heritage with over 35,000 members.
2. SWT believes that biodiversity conservation can only properly be advanced by the adoption of ecosystem-based conservation objectives and strategies which enhance biodiversity by fostering robust and healthy ecosystems, taking full account of ecosystem processes and function.
3. SWT's response to IUCN's consultation *2010 is almost here – now what? - Options for a new vision for Biodiversity* is available at <http://www.swt.org.uk>

The biodiversity conservation imperative

4. SWT welcomes the broad thrust of the emerging position, including the explicit linkage of biodiversity conservation and fully functioning, healthy ecosystems with human health and well-being, especially for the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Scope and elements of a new Strategic Plan for the CDB

5. We agree that a more effective framework for national implementation is required and that national targets are a key means of achieving this. We would argue that in framing such targets, it is important to take full account of constitutional and administrative structures which may, if "national" is taken to mean sovereign state, lead to the assignment of targets to levels of government which have no remit to deliver them. For example, around 80% of the United Kingdom's blanket bog, a priority habitat, is located in Scotland. Although there is a UK target for blanket bog restoration, the Scottish Government has not identified a target. Habitats and species conservation responsibilities and powers are devolved to the Scottish Parliament. A mechanism for recognising sub-national levels of government and administration is required to take account of such structural barriers to effective conservation.

Mission for 2015 or 2010 (post 2010 target)

6. SWT strongly endorses the statement that "IUCN is concerned about the tendency in some quarters to highlight ecosystem services at the expense of acknowledging the critical role of species in conservation."

7. We feel that the option for a new Mission “To have taken by 2020 the necessary urgent, concerted and effective actions to address the threats facing biodiversity so as to stop biodiversity loss, and have started to restore ecosystems, thus ensuring the continued provision of ecosystem services, and avoiding dangerous or irreversible environmental change” is weaker than it could be and would be improved by a firmer commitment significant progress being made to the restoration of ecosystems rather than “started to restore” .
8. A 2015 deadline does not seem to us to be realistic. A 2020 with a 2015 milestone would be preferable and more achievable with fewer risks of failure and target-fatigue.

Strategic Objectives and Targets for 2015/2020

9. Whilst we understand the desirability of setting SMART targets wherever possible, the lack of baseline data for many species/habitats/ecosystems may mean that truly SMART targets are not possible. There is a significant risk that important elements of biodiversity might be neglected in national or sub-national target-setting for want of adequate data. SWT is of the view that too strict an adherence to SMART targets could lead to a failure to properly conserve biodiversity.
10. SWT is strongly in favour of targets for restoration and for ecological and biological connectivity.
11. “The extinction of known threatened species (vertebrates and higher plants) has been prevented by ensuring that all such threatened species are protected in at least one site” should be strengthened to emphasise that one site should be considered to be an absolute minimum and that the objective must be to protect threatened species on multiple sites. All taxonomic groups should be included, not just vertebrates and higher plants.

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