

Study targets biodiversity conservation underfunders

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If you take into consideration how much a country is expected to spend on conserving biodiversity, based on its size, wealth and share of biodiversity, a new study uncovers some surprising delinquents.

Simon Fraser University biodiversity expert Arne Mooers is among eight [international scientists](#) who have found that Austria, China, Australia and France are among 40 countries globally that underfund biodiversity conservation the most.

At nearly \$1 billion US annually, the Netherlands was considered the best funder.

The authors' ranking of these countries is the outcome of their analysis of 124 countries' spending on biodiversity conservation in 2005 over the nine-year period, 2001 to 2008.

The journal, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, has just published the findings in the article, "Targeting [global conservation](#) funding to limit immediate biodiversity declines."

The study used mammals as a surrogate for total biodiversity to establish a manageable starting point for analysing conservation spending.

To apportion responsibility for the world's 5,500 known [mammalian species](#), researchers calculated how much of each animal's range falls within a given country.

China, for example, bears 100 per cent responsibility for the [giant panda](#) because all remaining wild pandas live in [mountain ranges](#) in the interior of that country. The polar bear, meanwhile, is divided up between Canada and other Arctic countries.

The authors found that the bulk of the countries on their top-40 biodiversity conservation under-funders list are either underdeveloped, extremely poor, war-torn or some combination of the three conditions. The worst were Iraq, Djibouti, Angola and Kyrgyzstan. "These are countries where very modest investment could reap real returns," says Mooers.

The authors were shaken to find collectively the top-40 under-funders are responsible for 32 per cent of the world's mammalian diversity.

"Highly underfunded countries are often neighbours, creating areas where underfunding affects taxa across their entire ranges," says the study. Of particular concern is the geographical grouping of Malaysia-Indonesia-Australia, a region that holds a large amount of threatened biodiversity.

The world currently spends about \$19 billion US annually on biodiversity conservation. But international conservation organizations have established that amount is at least 10 times under what is needed to halt the current global rate of biodiversity loss.

The authors undertook this study to strategize where to best allocate money to help the world meet 2020 UN-set biodiversity conservation targets, after failing to meet 2010 ones.

Underperforming rich countries pose particular problems. "We were caught off guard to find that some of the richest countries spending the most on biodiversity are among the top-40 under-funders. This is a real

conundrum," says Mooers.

"And while at first blush Canada appears to be in the top 10 per cent of [biodiversity conservation](#) funders, when compared with other developed countries, we are very much in the middle of the pack," says Mooers.

More information:

www.pnas.org/content/early/2013/06/26/1221370110

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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