

Biodiversity offsets need a national strategy to succeed

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In a paper published by *PLOS ONE*, researchers concluded that a national strategy must be implemented in order to compensate for environmental damage caused by development projects in Africa.

Studying these issues and other serious [ethical concerns](#), the research discovered that current offset programs - which are planned and designed on a project-by-project basis - fail to take into account the cumulative impacts of various conservations projects taking place in the same country or region.

The scientists from the universities of California, Stirling and Kent alongside representatives from [conservation](#) organisations worldwide also found these programs ignore wider considerations of [population viability](#) and consequently fail to contribute significantly to species' conservation.

The researchers consider strategic planning to be vital and [offsets](#) which involve damage to ape habitat need to be planned on a broader scale. For example, offsets need to be designed and implemented as part of a coordinated, national offset strategy where each one is integrated with other conservation planning efforts nationwide and/or regionally to give them the best chance of success.

The researchers also recommend that these strategies should take account of the cumulative impacts of development in individual countries by mapping the best locations for offsets to promote species

conservation objectives, as well as by creating 'no-go zones' for any development.

By focusing on the possibilities of aggregating offsets to create larger protected areas, a coherent and a more stable and genetically healthy population is likely in the long term, they suggest.

More information: The paper titled: 'Great Apes and Biodiversity Offset Projects in Africa: The Case for National Offset Strategies' is published in *PLOS ONE*, on 5 November 2014.

Provided by University of Kent

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