Bridging the gap between biodiversity data and policy reporting needs

April 2 2015

Reporting under policy instruments to inform on the trends in biodiversity requires information from a range of different elements of biodiversity, from genetically viable populations to the structure of ecosystems. A new research looks into the Essential Biodiversity Variables as an analytic framework to identify ways in which gaps between biodiversity data and policy reporting needs could be bridged. The study was published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology*.

The Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs, Pereira et al. 2013) which were previously developed by ecology experts in GEO BON, is as a list of the most essential elements that need to be monitored worldwide, if we want to know how biodiversity is really changing.Example of essential variables is the population abundances of species (like the Living Plant Index from the WWF) or the extent of habitat fragmentation.

In the recently published study, funded by the EU FP7 project EU BON, scientists used the identified EBVs as a framework to analyse the gaps between the biodiversity objectives stated in international policy instruments, the indicators used to develop the related policy reports and the data that is actually available to quantify indicators and proxies.

Results of the recently published study show:

1) which aspects of biodiversity are being asked for the reporting on

policy instruments. Based on this knowledge,it became apparent which aspects of biodiversity are not often asked to be in these reports and thus for which aspects policy makers are unlikely to receive information. For example information on the changes in the EBV class "Genetic Composition", was not often asked in reports, not often used in indicators and little data is directly available.

2) which of these biodiversity aspects actually end up being in the CBD reports, because scientists were able to quantify indicators. For instance, information for Ecosystem function is often asked for, but is not represented by many indicators.

3) for some EBVs data seems available to improve current reporting efforts, for instance for indicators on Ecosystem structure.

Additionally, the study identified which potentially available data could be used to improve existing indicators by adding more taxa or spatial or temporal coverage. This analysis also showed that the EBVs will not cover all the information asked in policy reporting. This is because the policy objectives also include things related to awareness raising of the public and the implementation of protection measures - aspects which are not within the scope of EBVs.

"Analytical properties, such as an identification of which data and indicators are relevant per EBV, will need to be addressed before EBVs can actually become operational and facilitate the integration of data flows for monitoring and reporting." commented the lead author of the study Dr. Ilse Geijzendorffer.

More information: Geijzendorffer, I.R., Regan, E.C., Pereira, H. M., Brotons, L., Brummitt, N., Gavish, Y., Haase, P., Martin, C.S., Mihoub, J.-B., Secades, C., Schmeller, D.S., Stoll, S., Wetzel, F. T., & Walters, M., *Journal of Applied Ecology*, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10 …

-2664.12417/abstract

Provided by Pensoft Publishers