

Ensuring that protected areas are more than "paper parks"

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Protected areas are the cornerstone to prevent species extinctions. The Convention on Biological Diversity have set a target to protect 17% of all terrestrial land by 2020.

Many of the recommendations are provided for single countries to take action individually. Researchers in the University of Helsinki, Finland, stress the importance of international collaborations in the protected area expansion process.

"It has been shown that working at the country level is less efficient than promoting transnational collaborations. As a result, platforms that support international collaborations from planning based on improved data to effective management should be strengthened," says Dr. Tuuli Toivonen, a tenure track professor in geoinformatics.

The researchers conclude that mechanisms for [international collaboration](#) should be in place and strengthened quickly, as global change and other threats are quickly eroding biodiversity. Collaborations are crucial in specific key areas:

"More data are needed on the distribution of species, particularly for plants and for less known groups such as invertebrates. Creating and maintaining the core data resources should also be secured," says Dr. Enrico Di Minin, a researcher in conservation science.

There should also be an emphasis on protecting all species that are

currently unprotected globally. Meeting a percentage target of protected area coverage within individual countries is not enough. "In addition, the international community should ensure that resources are available to effectively manage [protected areas](#) once they are established," Di Minin continues.

The researchers state that the current protected area network is biased towards higher lands and unproductive landscapes, missing many priority areas for conservation. As such, many species are currently not protected.

"Also, resources for management activities are woefully inadequate, making many of these protected areas exist only on paper," Di Minin says.

At the recent World Parks Congress organized by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Sydney, Australia, conservation professionals drafted twelve innovative approaches, as part of the 'Promise of Sydney', to help transform decision-making, policy, capacity and financing for protected areas in the next decade. The document includes a list of 20 important recommendations to help reach global [conservation](#) goals.

More information: "Global Protected Area Expansion: Creating More than Paper Parks." *BioScience* (2015) [DOI: 10.1093/biosci/biv064](https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biv064)

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