

# Island conservationists identify key barriers to meeting biodiversity targets

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The impacts of invasive alien species, habitat loss and climate change are compounded in small island nations, which are highly dependent on biodiversity for their economic and social wellbeing. The failure to meet global biodiversity targets clearly indicates the need for more effective biodiversity management and conservation efforts, and this in turn

requires better understanding of the current barriers to success.

Research with island conservationists in the Western Indian Ocean revealed a raft of barriers operating across [management](#) levels, which interfere with their ability to achieve local and national conservation objectives. The most [common problems](#) were limited capacity, limited resources and a lack of government coordination. These barriers hinder the ability of countries to meet national targets and contribute to global biodiversity targets. The paper was published today in *Conservation Science and Practice*.

April Burt, from the University of Oxford and lead author of the study, said, "By defining these barriers through systematic research, they can be brought forward for discussion between practitioners across management levels."

One conservation practitioner described the "fragmentation of efforts," whereby practitioners have "no idea what is happening on other islands," and are "all doing the same thing, in slightly different ways but not sharing lessons learned."

April Burt said, "This lack of connection and collaboration makes it difficult to track and synthesize conservation management outcomes, compile national data, identify successful (and unsuccessful) actions and ultimately to maximize resource use and effective management."

One of the most surprising findings was the prevalence in which conservation practitioners had encountered egos and interpersonal conflict within senior management as a major [barrier](#). One practitioner described how "historic 'egos' govern organizations from a top-down approach."

Although the study focuses on the main barriers, it also highlights

potential solutions.

April Burt says, "It is important to recognize that, despite the barriers outlined in this study, there is a huge amount of crucial and successful [conservation](#) work being carried out by the region's practitioners. Many of these have already recognized certain barriers and are proactively dealing with them; for example, by creating data management positions or by developing collaborations with research institutes to facilitate data analysis."

One example provided was of an NGO who coordinates annual meetings for focus groups on seabirds and one of the long-term endemic land bird species recovery programs, despite no longer receiving project funds to do this.

Finally, April Burt says, "Finding meaningful solutions relies on us being honest, realistic and self-critical, but implementing them will require national level investment. Only by doing so can we increase the effectiveness of our management across local and national levels and maximize our chances of achieving global biodiversity targets."

**More information:** April J. Burt et al, Defining and bridging the barriers to more effective conservation of island ecosystems: A practitioner's perspective, *Conservation Science and Practice* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/csp2.587](https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.587)

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