
Priorities for conservation and restoration in Europe

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Abstract

There is a need to improve the protected area network in Europe and to establish a coherent, well-connected network of protected areas which includes the most important areas for protection of European biodiversity across all of its ecosystems. Using systematic conservation planning, we developed multiple prioritisation scenarios for conservation and restoration in Europe, that maximise the achievement of targets for species, habitats and ecosystem services given constraints and costs. We identify top priority areas that reach the objective of 30% protection, including 10% strict protection, and 20% of restored land. These areas are designed to complement existing protected sites and to close conservation gaps in the protection of species and habitats, while ensuring a fair sharing of protected land across European biogeographic regions and member states. We assessed the conservation gains of protecting these top priorities, and analysed the trade-offs between different variant scenarios. In particular, we identify "win-win" solutions that achieve multiple objectives for nature and people across a range of possible prioritisation scenarios integrating existing values, costs, constraints and opportunities. Going forward, we will expand on these scenarios by ensuring that the protected area network is spatially connected and resilient to current and future climates.

Keywords: spatial conservation, biogeography, strict protection, restoration, Europe, terrestrial ecosystems, Natura 2000, Biodiversity Strategy

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