



Thematic Area:

Valuing biodiversity and ecosystem services

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Key contacts



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Aims of the workshop

This workshop was convened through the Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI) Shared Challenges programme with the aim of:

- Bringing together CCI partners (and others) to share information on current and planned ecosystems services projects
- Identifying and discussing practical challenges being encountered by partners in assessing and valuing ecosystem services
- Identifying opportunities for closer collaboration between organization and projects to address these challenges and to share lessons learnt
- Considering opportunities for future joint initiatives between individuals/institutions on ecosystem services

Perspectives on ecosystem services

Whilst a primary aim of the workshop was to discuss practical challenges in ecosystem services projects it was recognised that this sits within a framework of considerations for conservation organisations contemplating this agenda. A key issue was the extent to which adopting an ecosystem services agenda requires a fundamental shift in the philosophy of conservation organisations and what they do, as opposed to a 'repackaging' of what they do for a different audience. The benefits of an ecosystem services approach were discussed, including for linking biodiversity to other sectors tapping into new sources of funding e.g. carbon markets. However there is not a perfect overlap between biodiversity and ecosystem services and it was vital to be aware of trade-offs. Conservation organisations tended to be committed to delivering ecosystem services where this did not compromise delivery of conservation objectives, but still aimed to deliver biodiversity as their main outcome.



Project presentations and key challenges

Project presentations ranged from valuing ecosystem services in Tanzania and Nepal, to assessing the value of Southern-Atlantic ocean ecosystem services and north-west European salt marshes. These highlighted key challenges faced in assessing and valuing ecosystem services including: defining the relationship between biodiversity and ecosystem services and dealing with tradeoffs; dealing with data shortages, particularly for ecosystem services mapping; building capacity for an ecosystem services agenda and how to develop local participatory approaches and tools; dealing with monetary vs non monetary values; issues of scale; thresholds; how to foster interdisciplinary collaborations for ecosystem services research; linking to policy and dealing with and explaining uncertainty; and communicating an ecosystem services agenda.

Working groups explored some of these issues in more depth. One group explored **how to develop a robust site-based approach to ecosystem services**, recognising a need for an intermediate between detailed scientific site based assessments and top down national/regional assessments, that uses participatory methods and takes into account local values. Challenges were recognised in developing such approaches whilst still ensuring appropriate professional input and accuracy of data. Ways to address this included a 'two tier approach' that combines professional input and is supported by trained volunteers; and allocating professional resources towards key uncertainties in knowledge or data collected. It was thought useful lessons could be drawn from the bird community, for example the extensive citizen science programmes organised by the British Trust for Ornithology.

A second group discussed **'multiple objectives and trade-offs'** recognising that ecosystem services delivery will always require consideration of multiple objectives, with complex relationships between them and there will be trade-offs. Different actors and stakeholders will also put different weight on different values; values will change over time and there will also be inter-generational considerations – all of these have implications for trade-offs. It was thought important not to assume 'win-wins' but to be realistic and honest about trade-offs and to find means of assessing them more effectively. Doing this will involve investigating the use of other metrics (in addition to financial) with which people can weigh up different risks and opportunities; an improved understanding of cultural ecosystem services and values, continuing and improving basic monitoring and adequate capacity building.

The third group explored **'end user needs'** and the need to define the information needs of different stakeholders on ecosystem services. It was important to establish a dialogue with end users of ecosystem services information to find out their requirements, rather than just produce data in a vacuum. This dialogue can be used not just to establish needs but also to influence needs and help develop the types of partnerships needed for ecosystem services delivery. Scenarios were thought to be an engaging way to communicate about ecosystem services and how they are changing



Next steps

These groups identified a number of potential priorities for follow up by the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and others including:

- Establish a CCI/UK expert panel to provide advice and experience to ecosystem services projects across the Cambridge conservation community
- Create a registry of contacts and experts in the ecosystem services arena to help move forward topics and collaborations more quickly
- A workshop or research project to look 'beyond win wins'- to assess the outputs and results of ecosystem services projects for evidence that establishes circumstances in which synergies or 'win wins' are achieved; and where there are tradeoffs
- Conservation organisations and other stakeholders should advocate on the importance of continued monitoring for baselines for ecosystem services assessment and valuation- including to relevant research funders.

CCI partners involved:

- UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
- BirdLife International
- IUCN
- Departments in the University of Cambridge, including Zoology and Geography

Other organisations

- Conservation International
- The British Antarctic Survey

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