

Can we manage unmanaged forest?

Jacob Heilmann-Clausen, University of Copenhagen

Until recently, the designation of unmanaged forest reserves was considered the most cost-effective means to conserve forest biodiversity. However, it has become increasingly clear that the delivery time for development of many key structures associated with old growth forest habitats is long, and that sensitive populations subject to extinction debts may be lost before suitable habitats have reemerged, when managed forests are set aside as unmanaged forest. In addition, the cessation of active forestry may in the short-term lead to uniform and very dense stand structures posing a potential threat to light-demanding species. To counteract this, active management or restoration are possible solutions, depending on conservation goals. Based on experience from a research project in the Gribskov forest (Denmark), insights to guide the definition of restoration goals and actions will be provided with a focus on dead wood, veteran tree microhabitats and stand structure.