

Net positive outcomes: goals for nature based on performance against counterfactuals

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Nature is constantly in flux, and we live in a changing world in which entirely new ecosystems will continue to emerge. In order to plan conservation interventions in such a world – instead of seeking to return nature to some historical state - our starting point must be to project the world we want to see in the absence of those interventions i.e. a 'counterfactual' world. Our interventions can then attempt to ensure that the net result of human activities overall is an improvement compared to that counterfactual. The concept of 'net outcomes for nature' implicitly underpins the state of the art in conservation policy, including the mission of the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework. In my talk, I will explore some of the challenges with seeking net positive outcomes for nature.