

Conservation Biology

Jeff Nekola
PřF:Bi8370
D31-238

Spring 2023
Wednesday 12:00-14:00

This course has two specific goals: the most obvious is learning the guiding principles of Conservation Biology – the field which applies ecological principles to the protection of biological diversity. Although many claim that this is a well-developed (and perhaps even) mature field, I do not see this as the case. Instead, I agree with Susan Bratton that our current ability to design and care for nature reserves is similar to the record of the medical profession in 18th century Vienna, where patients had a greater chance of dying under a doctor's care than if diseases were let to run their own course. If Conservation Biology is to become a benefit (and not drain) on biological diversity, its practitioners must become aware of their lack of understanding and be able to decide for themselves the relative merits of differing approaches in the lack of such information.

But how do we do this? One problem is in the fact that it is probably likely up until now that your education [has been primarily based on rote memorization rather than critical thinking and problem-solving](https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/czech-school-inspection-pupils-aren-t-being-challenged-enough) <<<https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/czech-school-inspection-pupils-aren-t-being-challenged-enough>>>. I have noted the emphasis on memorizing facts, rather than general understanding and creative thinking, as a general difference between students here versus those I used to teach back in the USA. And in Conservation Biology it is crucial that we not simply memorize “facts” because these are often wrong! Rather it is essential that you develop your ability to independently think about these topics, be able to sift the accurate from the false, and learn how to defend your point of view.

Which leads to the second (but in some ways more important) goal: to help you develop the ability to read the primary literature and determine the most important points found in each paper. And then to assess whether those points have been adequately proven/justified, and finally how to use them to create your own logically defensible arguments. In essence each paper we read creates some number of puzzle pieces, and what you need to learn what that puzzle is making is how to fit these pieces together. My guess is that this is not something you have often been asked to do. And yet this is an absolutely critical underlying skill not only in Conservation Biology, but for all your other scientific activities as well. We must raise above spitting back other people's ideas: rather we need to create, communicate, and defend our own unique perspective. This is how science advances.

As a result it is absolutely essential that you come to class each week having **already** read the assigned papers, and being ready to discuss them. I will help guide the classroom discussion to make sure that important points are not missed. But in the end the course will either succeed or fail based on your willingness to come to class each week prepared to discuss the readings. Will it be easy? No! You will likely feel uncomfortable (1) providing your own ideas – rather than those which you have been told to remember by others; and (2) talking in English. Realize that everyone in the class is facing the same issues so there is no reason to be embarrassed. And also that the best way to confront these are through practice, practice, practice in a nurturing environment. Which means participating in class discussion each and every meeting. It will get easier over time, and (hopefully) you will find joy in learning how to make and communicate your own thoughts with others!

Over the semester I hope to not only provide you with access to the knowledge needed to make wise conservation choices, but also to foster your ability to independently think about – and defend – your choices regarding conservation strategies. To do this we will first overview important ecological principles underlying conservation biology, and then second will apply these principles to real-world situations. The issue here is not just knowing the relevant concepts, but also to critically and objectively assess the major theories and paradigms which underlie this most important of ecological fields.

Expectations & Course Lectures

If learning to read and discuss and use the primary literature to construct arguments, and applying this skill specifically to the field of Conservation Biology does not sound like something you want to do, **PLEASE** unroll! This course is not for you. And that's fine. Attendance at lectures is strongly recommended, and is absolutely essential for doing well in the class. If you do have to miss a lecture, please see me, and try to obtain notes from a friend. We will not use a textbook. Rather, we will read the original literature on the subject which I have compiled and has been made available on the course website on the IS portal. Please keep up with your readings! It will be very easy to fall so far behind that you will not be able to catch up.

Evaluation

Course grades will be based on two equally weighted exams. These will be comprehensive, covering all material presented in the class to that time, and will be based on essay questions, as this is the only way I have of really determining your basic understanding of the topics covered. They will consist of short-essay-length responses to a series of questions in which you apply your readings and additional insights. These essays will be open book / computer and you will have two weeks to respond. The issue will be sifting through the available information to make and defend your personal answer. Your score will be based on not only the accurateness of the science you present, but also how well you integrate these ideas and defend your position. Yes, I will know if you are plagiarizing. So don't. You won't like the consequences.

IMPORTANT DATES

April 19: Exam 1 due

May 24: Exam 2 due

Course Schedule

February 15: Course Introduction; Philosophical Ethics

(Overview the main philosophical ethics perspectives, in particular Theological and Deontological approaches)

February 22: Philosophical and Conservation Ethics (Cobb, Leopold, Littlebird, Meyers)

(Apply theological and deontological approaches to conservation)

March 1: Conservation Ethics class debate

- *An Island* (McPhee)

(Investigate the different ethical positions held by conservationists and developers through a class debate centered around Cumberland Island, Georgia.)

March 8: Humans and Biological Diversity

--*Negative Impacts (Baker et al., Kirch)*

(How exploitative human cultures have altered communities, species diversity, and ecosystem processes in the U.S. Midwest and Polynesia)

--*Positive Impacts (Harlan, Pistrick, Williams, Brush et al.)*

(Development and maintenance of food plant and animal diversity; fate of cultural biodiversity; centers of domestication.)

March 15: Population Genetics (Frankel & Soulé, Ehrlich)

(Processes which effect genetic diversity, and the relationship between genetic diversity, fitness, and extinction)

Population Biology (Krukeberg & Rabinowitz, Ehrlich & Murphy)

(Structure of populations and meta-populations; the factors leading to population endemism; the seven forms of rarity).

March 22: Minimum Viable Populations (Gilpin & Soulé, Menges)

(Definition of minimum viable populations; equilibrium and non-equilibrium methods to determine this number for various circumstances)

Spatial Scale (Wiens, Palmer & White)

(Role of spatial scale in the observation of ecological process and pattern; scale vs. richness.)

March 29: Disturbance Ecology

--*Small Scale (Sousa, White)*

(Types of disturbances, patch dynamics, exogenous vs. endogenous disturbance regimes; return interval and intensity; impact on sessile and mobile organisms.)

--*Large Scale (Romme & Knight, Turner et al.)*

(Landscape diversity; quasi- vs. non-equilibrium landscapes; disturbance-diversity relationships; disturbance in the Yellowstone ecosystem.)

April 5: Habitat Fragmentation

--*Short-term effects (Bierregaard et al., Robinson et al.)*

(Effect of habitat fragmentation on organism abundance and movement; thresholds to response; relaxation in species richness)

--*Long-term effects (Carlquist, Nekola)*

(Evolutionary response of organisms to isolation; community responses to isolation; neo- and paleo-refugia.)

EXAM 1 (distributed at end of class)

April 12: Single Large or Several Small (SLOSS) Debate (Diamond, Simberloff & Gotelli)

(Should reserves be made few and large or many and small?)

Corridors Debate (Noss, Harrison, Simberloff et al.)

(Should reserves be connected by corridors?)

April 19: Dynamic Systems and Reserve Design. (Dolan et al., Pickett & Thompson)

(How to design [and manage] reserves which protect constantly changing communities.)

Reserve Integrity (Schonewald-Cox, Peters, Romme & Turner)

(How do processes outside of reserve boundaries affect biodiversity within reserves?)

EXAM 1 (due no later than 17:00)

April 26: Ex-situ vs. In-situ Conservation (Falk & McMahan, Hamilton)

(Should species be protected in artificial environments?)

Species Reintroduction (Cade, Bangs & Fritts, Allen)

(When, if ever, is reintroduction of species appropriate?)

May 3: Community Restoration (Jordan, Zedler, Bradshaw, Diamond)

(Can and should we attempt to recreate entire communities?)

Game Management (Rudolph & Hunter, Christman, Alverson *et al.*, Kaufman)

(How have deer, duck, and fish management impacted total biodiversity?)

May 10: Exotic Species Problems and Responses. Vitousek, Bland & Temple, Carlton & Geller, Nuzzo, Scheffer

(How have exotic species introductions altered biodiversity? What can be done to fix things?)

EXAM 2: distributed at end of class May 10; returned no later than 17 on May 24

READINGS

February 22:

- Cobb, J.B. Jr. 1986. A Christian view of biodiversity. pages 481-485 in Wilson, E.O. & F.M. Peter (eds), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
- Leopold, A. 1948. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, New York. pages 201-226.
- Littlebird, L. 1986. Cold water spirit. pages 476-480 in Wilson, E.O. & F.M. Peter (eds), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
- Meyers, N. 1983. By saving wild species we may be saving ourselves. *Nature Conservancy News*. pages 7-13.

March 1:

- McPhee, J. 1971. *Encounters With the Archdruid*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux Press, New York. pages 79-150.

March 8:

- Baker, R.G., Schwert, D.P., Bettis, E.A. III, and C.A. Chumbley. 1993. Impact of Euro-American settlement on a riparian landscape in northeast Iowa, USA: an integrated approach based on historical evidence, floodplain sediments, fossil pollen, plant macrofossils, and insects. *The Holocene*. 3:314-323.
- Brush, S.B., Carney, H.J., and Z. Huamén. 1981. Dynamics of Andean potato agriculture. *Economic Botany*. 35:70-88.
- Harlan, J.R. 1975. The Americas. pages 225-236 in: *Crops and Man*. American Society of Agronomy, Madison, Wisconsin.
- Kirch, P.V. 1983. Man's role in modifying tropical and subtropical Polynesian ecosystems. *Archeology of Oceania*. 18:26-31.
- Pistrick, K. 1995. Maramures and Muntii Apuseni -- crop plant diversity and living past in Rumania. *Seed Savers 1995 Summer Edition*. Pages 61-79
- Williams, J.T. 1986. Identifying and protecting the origins of our food plants. pages 240-247 in Wilson, E.O. & F.M. Peter (eds), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.

March 15:

- Ehrlich, P.R. 1983. Genetics and the extinction of butterfly populations. pages 152-163 in Schonewald-Cox, C.M., Chambers, S.M., MacBryde, B., and Thomas, L. (eds), *Genetics and Conservation*. Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company, Inc., Menlo Park, California.
- Ehrlich, P.R. and D.D. Murphy. 1987. Conservation lessons from long-term studies of checkerspot butterflies. *Conservation Biology*. 1:122-131.
- Frankel, O.H. and M.E. Soul_. 1981. *Conservation and evolution*. Cambridge University Press, New York. pages 31-77.
- Krukeberg, A.R. and D. Rabinowitz. 1985. Biological aspects of endemism in higher plants. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*. 16:447-479.

March 22:

- Gilpin, M.E. and M.E. Soulé. 1986. Minimum viable populations: processes of species extinction. Pages 19-34 in: Soul_, M.E. (ed), *Conservation Biology*. Sinauer Associates, Sunderland, Massachusetts.
- Menges, E.S. 1986. Predicting the future of rare plant populations: demographic monitoring and modeling. *Natural Areas Journal*. 6:13-25.

- Palmer, M.W. and P.S. White. 1994. Scale dependence and the species-area relationship. *American Naturalist*. 144:717-740.
- Wiens, J.A. 1989. Spatial scaling in ecology. *Functional Ecology*. 3:385-397.

March 29:

- Romme, W.H. and D.H. Knight. 1982. Landscape diversity: the concept applied to Yellowstone Park. *Bioscience*. 32:664-670.
- Sousa, W.P. 1984. The role of disturbance in natural communities. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*. 15:353-391.
- Turner, M.G., Romme, W.H., and R.H. Gardner. 1994. Landscape disturbance models and the long-term dynamics of natural areas. *Natural Areas Journal*. 14:3-11.
- White, P.S. 1987. Natural disturbance, patch dynamics, and landscape patterns in natural areas. *Natural Areas Journal*. 7:14-22.

April 5:

- Bierngaard, R.O. Jr., Lovejoy, T.E., Kapos, V., Augusto dos Santos, A., Hutchings, R.W. 1992. The biological dynamics of tropical rainforest fragments. *Bioscience*. 42:859-866.
- Carlquist, S. 1974. *Island biology*. Columbia University Press, New York. pages 487-508.
- Nekola, J.C. 1999. Paleoreugia and neoreugia: A biogeographic analysis of isolated habitats in northeastern Iowa. *Ecology*. 80: 2459-2473.
- Robinson, S.K., Thompson, F.R. III, Donovan, T.M., Whitehead, D.R., Faaborg, J. 1995. Regional fragmentation and the nesting success of migratory birds. *Science*. 267:1987-1990.

April 12:

- Diamond, J.M. 1975. The island dilemma: lessons of modern biogeographic studies for the design of nature reserves. *Biological Conservation*. 7:129-146.
- Harrison, R.L. 1991. Toward a theory of inter-refuge corridor design. *Conservation Biology*. 6:293-295.
- Noss, R.F. 1987. Corridors in real landscapes: a reply to Simberloff and Cox. *Conservation Biology*. 1:159-164.
- Simberloff, D. and N. Gotelli 1983. Refuge design and ecological theory: lessons for prairie and forest conservation. Pages 61-71 in R. Brewer (ed.), *Proceedings of the Eighth North American Prairie Conference*. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan.
- Simberloff, D., Farr, J.A., Cox, J., and D.W. Mehlman. 1992. Movement Corridors: conservation bargains or poor investments? *Conservation Biology*. 6:493-504.

April 19:

- Dolan, R., B.P. Hayden, and G. Soucie. 1978. Environmental dynamics and resource management in the U.S. National Parks. *Environmental Management*. 2:249-258.
- Peters, R.L. II. 1988. The effect of global climate change on natural communities. Pages 450-461 in E.O. Wilson (ed.), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
- Pickett, S.T.A. and J.N. Thompson. 1978. Patch dynamics and the design of nature reserves. *Biological Conservation*. 13:27-37.
- Romme, W.H. and M.G. Turner. 1991. Implications of global climate change for biogeographic patterns in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem. *Conservation Biology*. 5:373-386.

Schonewald-Cox, C.M. 1988. Boundaries in the Management of nature reserves. *Bioscience*. 38:480-486.

April 26:

- Allen, W.H. 1994. Reintroduction of endangered plants. *Bioscience*. 44:65-68.
- Bangs, E.E. and S.H. Fritts. 1993. Reintroduction of gray wolves to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho. *Endangered Species Technical Bulletin*. 18:1,18-20.
- Cade, T.J. 1988. Using science and technology to reestablish species lost in nature. Pages 279-287 in E.O. Wilson (ed.), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
- Falk, D.A. and L.R. McMahan. 1988. Endangered plant conservation: managing for diversity. *Natural Areas Journal*. 8:91-99.
- Hamilton, M.B. 1994. Ex-situ conservation of wild plant species: time to reassess the genetic assumptions and implications of seed banks. *Conservation Biology*. 8:39-49.

May 3:

- Alverson, W.S., Waller, D.M., and S.L. Solheim. 1988. Forests to deer: edge effects in northern Wisconsin. *Conservation Biology*. 2:348-358.
- Bradshaw, A.D. 1990. The reclamation of derelict land and the ecology of ecosystems. Pages 53-74 in W.R. Jordan III, M.E. Gilpin, and J.D. Aber (eds.), *Restoration Ecology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Christman, S.P. 1984. Breeding bird response to greentree reservoir management. *Journal of Wildlife Management*. 48:1164-1172.
- Diamond, J. 1990. Reflections on goals and on the relationship between theory and practice. Pages 329-336 in W.R. Jordan III, M.E. Gilpin, and J.D. Aber (eds.), *Restoration Ecology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Jordan, W.R. III. 1988. Ecological restoration: reflections on a half-century of experience at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. Pages 311-316 in E.O. Wilson (ed.), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
- Kaufman, L. 1992. Catastrophic change in species-rich freshwater ecosystems. *Bioscience*. 42:846-858.
- Rudolph, R.R. and C.G. Hunter. 1964. Greentrees and greenheads. Pages 611-618 in J.P. Lindusky (ed.), *Waterfowl Tomorrow*. U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.
- Zedler, J.B. 1988. Restoring diversity in salt marshes: can we do it? Pages 317-325 in E.O. Wilson (ed.), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.

May 10:

- Bland, J.D. and S.A. Temple. 1993. The Himalayan Snowcock: North America's newest exotic bird. Pages 149-155 in B.M. McKnight (ed.), *Biological Pollution: the Control and Impact of Invasive Exotic Species*. Indiana Academy of Science, Indianapolis.
- Carlton, J.T. and J.B. Geller. 1993. Ecological roulette: the global transport of nonindigenous marine organisms. *Science*. 261:78-82.
- Nuzzo, V. 1993. Distribution and spread of the invasive biennial *Allaria petiolata* (Garlic Mustard) in North America. Pages 137-145 in B.M. McKnight (ed.), *Biological Pollution: the Control and Impact of Invasive Exotic Species*. Indiana Academy of Science, Indianapolis.
- Scheffer, V.B. 1993. The Olympic goat controversy: a perspective. *Conservation Biology*. 7:916-920.
- Vitousek, P.M. 1988. Diversity and biological invasions of oceanic islands. Pages 181-189 in E.O. Wilson (ed.), *Biodiversity*. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.