

# **THE SHIFTING MOTIVATIONS AND TACTICS OF CONSERVATION, AND HOW TO RECONCILE THEM**

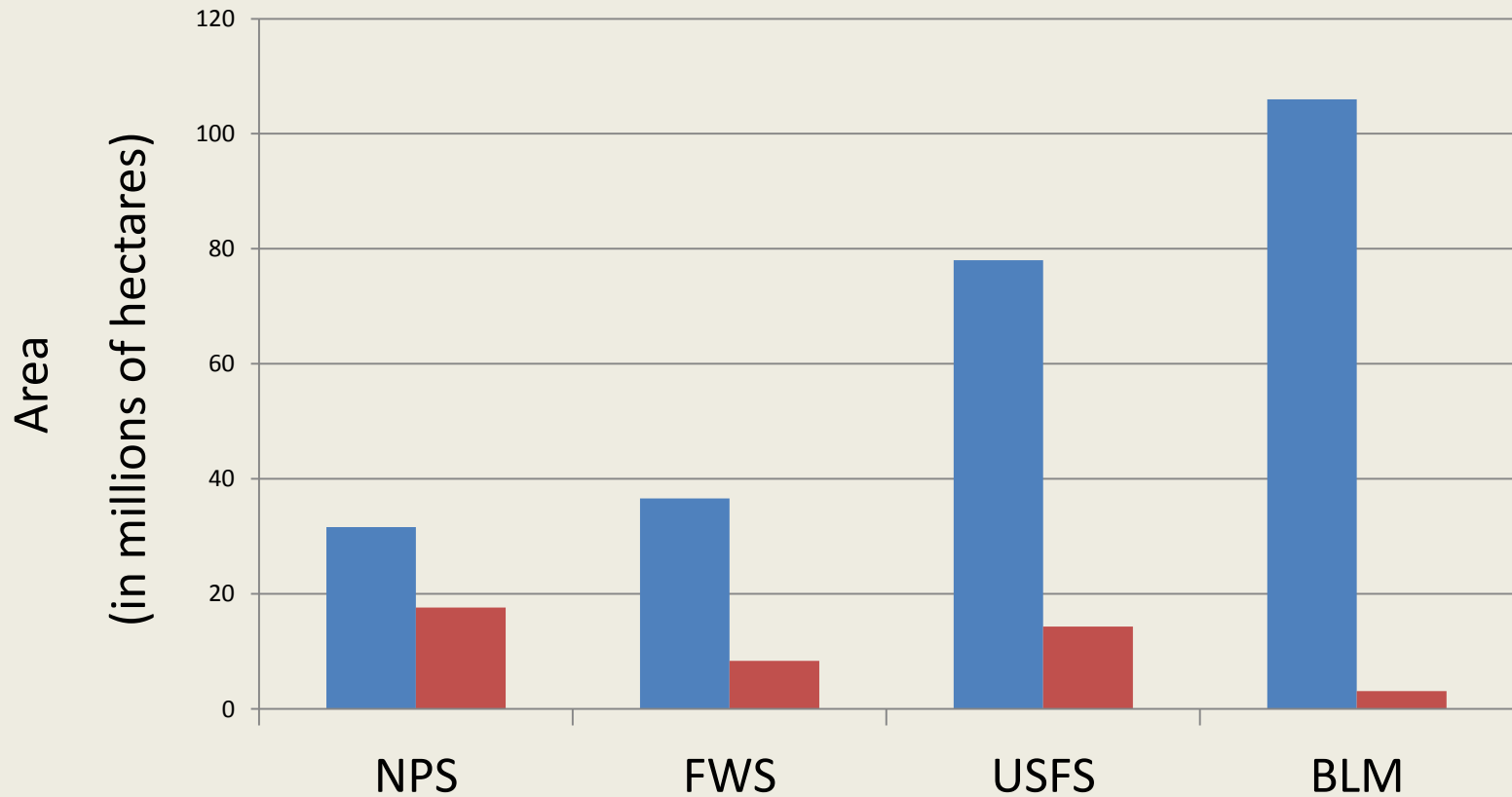
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Goldstein, and Ben Hale

# Historically, Conservation Efforts have been based on:

- **Multiple strategies.** e.g.:
  - Forest management
  - Wildlife management
  - Fisheries management
  - Preservation/restoration of natural ecosystems
  - Targeted efforts to save endangered species
- **Multiple core motivations:**
  - Anthro-philic
  - Bio-philic

# What is the *dominant* strategy or motivation?

The answer is pretty clear:



Nonetheless, many attempts to discredit the *minor* theme in tactics and motivation: Protecting nature & biodiversity for its own sake.

Much more recently, a push to discredit these non-anthropocentric approaches from ***within the conservation community*** itself.

Evidence? First, mission drift of Big Conservation NGOs

Conservation International ...empowers societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, **for the well-being of humanity.**

The Nature Conservancy ... conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends . **Our vision is to leave a sustainable world for future generations.**

World Wide Fund for Nature ...**build a future in which people live in harmony with nature...**

In contrast, an **old TNC mission statement: ...to preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.**

(See Morrison 2014, Conservation Biology for more examples)

And a more direct effort led by some NGO and academic scientists to claim that “***Protecting biodiversity for its own sake has failed***” and to propose a “new conservation science”:

***“The ultimate goal is better management of nature for human benefit.”***

***“21st century conservation tries to maximize biodiversity without compromising development goals”***

***“Instead of pursuing the protection of biodiversity for biodiversity’s sake, a new conservation should seek to enhance those natural systems that benefit the widest number of people...”***

(Quotes by Kareiva and Kareiva et al. see Doak et al 2014 for sources)

# So, what is the problem with this movement in conservation?

- It has claimed to be something new in conservation, which it is not.
- Much of the diagnosis of the state of conservation is flawed (see Doak et al. 2014)

More to the point:

**Is this a good way to advance conservation?**

There are two levels at which to address this question:

1<sup>st</sup>: The question of Efficacy:

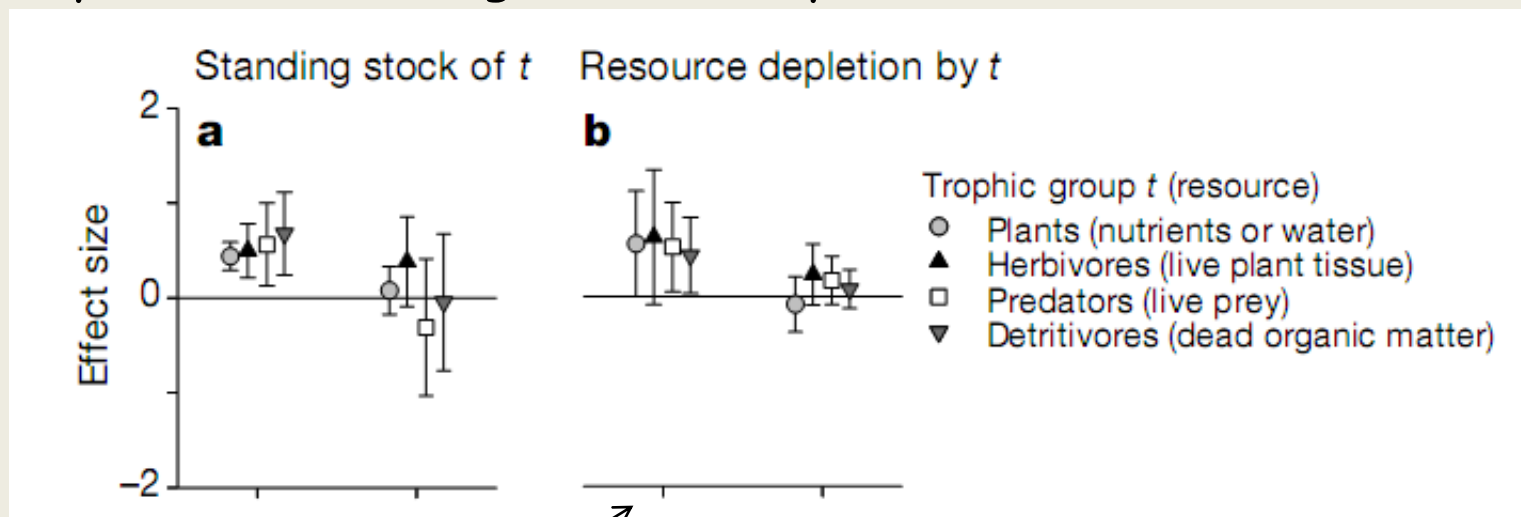
If we assume that conservation's goal is really to prevent extinctions and preserve ecosystems: *Are Anthro-po-philic approaches – alone – **sufficient** or **effective** for conserving "nature" writ large?*



There are many reasons to think that the answer is no.

*A. Hard Science. Do you need more species or natural communities to have high ecosystem services?*

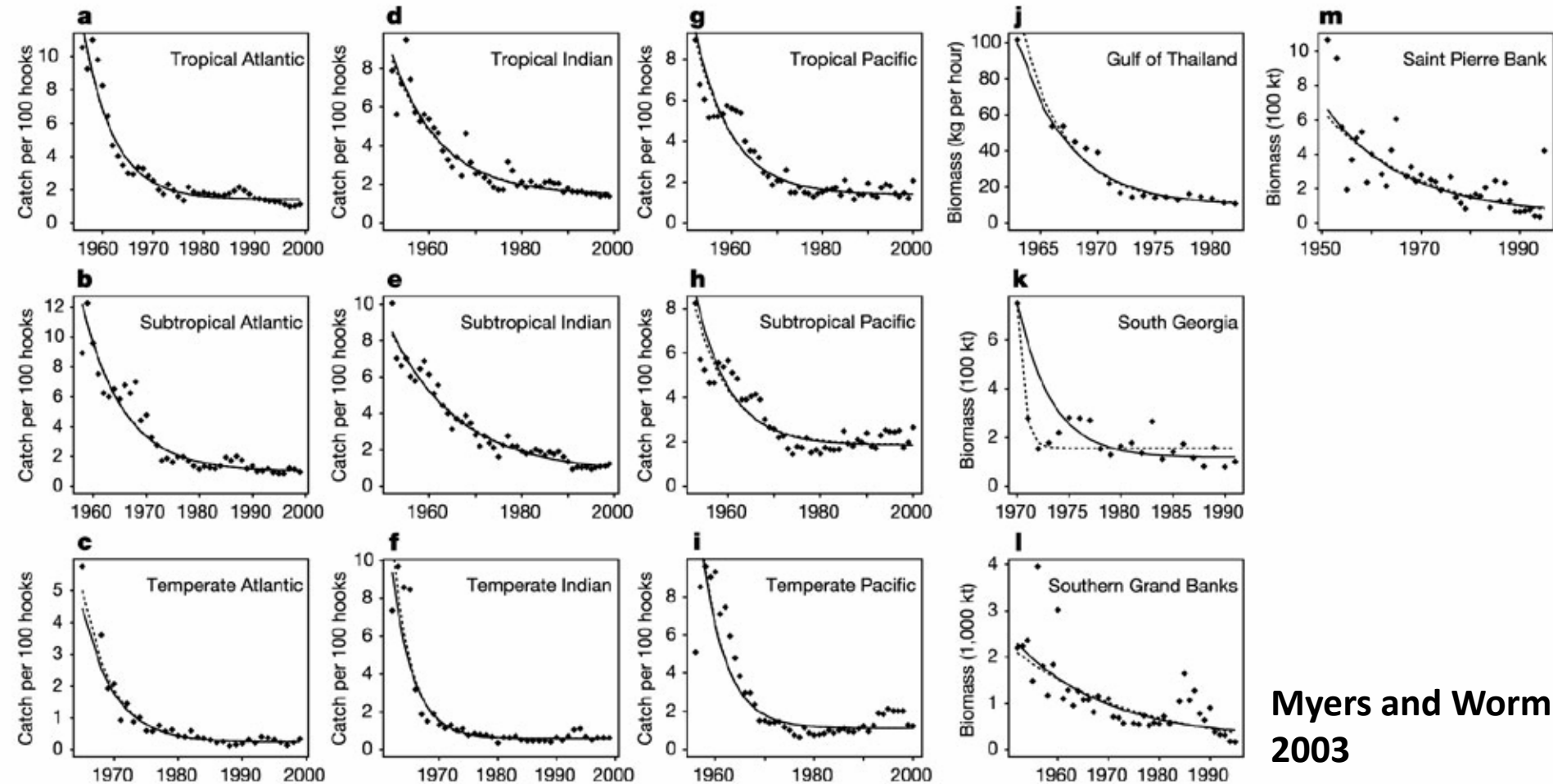
A review of 111 studies looking for effects of biodiversity on ecosystem functioning (read: ecosystem services)



Difference between diverse polycultures and the Average of Monocultures

Difference between diverse polycultures and the Highest Monoculture

*B. There are many examples of parts of the nature with high economic value being deeply overexploited.  
e.g., the management of some of the most clearly valuable species on earth – fish.*



**Myers and Worm  
2003**

**Note that this is not an argument that economic reasoning *can't* work....**

*Also, when the big fish are gone, do people value them enough to want to restore their populations, for their utilitarian value?*

**Go to Spain to get the answer:**





## C. Will economic analysis *reliably* prioritize the long term preservation of species or communities?

Colin W. Clark. 1973. Profit Maximization and the Extinction of Animal Species. Journal of Political Economy 81: 950-961



(also see W.M. Adams, Science October 2014)

## Similarly for ecological communities:

### Former Landfill, a Park to Be, Proves a Savior in the Hurricane

By MICHAEL KIMMELMAN

Published: December 17, 2012



This suggests that economic value can be a good add-on but not a good sole motivation for conservation (see W.M. Adams, Science 2014)

# The second approach to addressing the shift towards narrowed conservation motivations:

*Is it somehow more “right” to focus just on people?*

- This is a key argument of the ‘new conservation science’ proponents.
- The rationale is
  - partly that people only care about people, and we shouldn’t try to change their minds,
  - partly that nature should never come first if there are human needs to fill.

This argument ignores a lot of sociological and historical information:

A. There is a long history of *gradually* (and with reversals) extending the idea of intrinsic rights and value to wider and wider groups:

B. There are many successful campaigns to rapidly change perceptions of right and wrong. e.g.,

- Ending slavery,
- Extending gay rights, endorsing gay marriage
- Animal rights
- Stopping the feather trade,
- Not torturing your captured enemies



Perhaps the most compelling argument for keeping intrinsic value as a motivation:

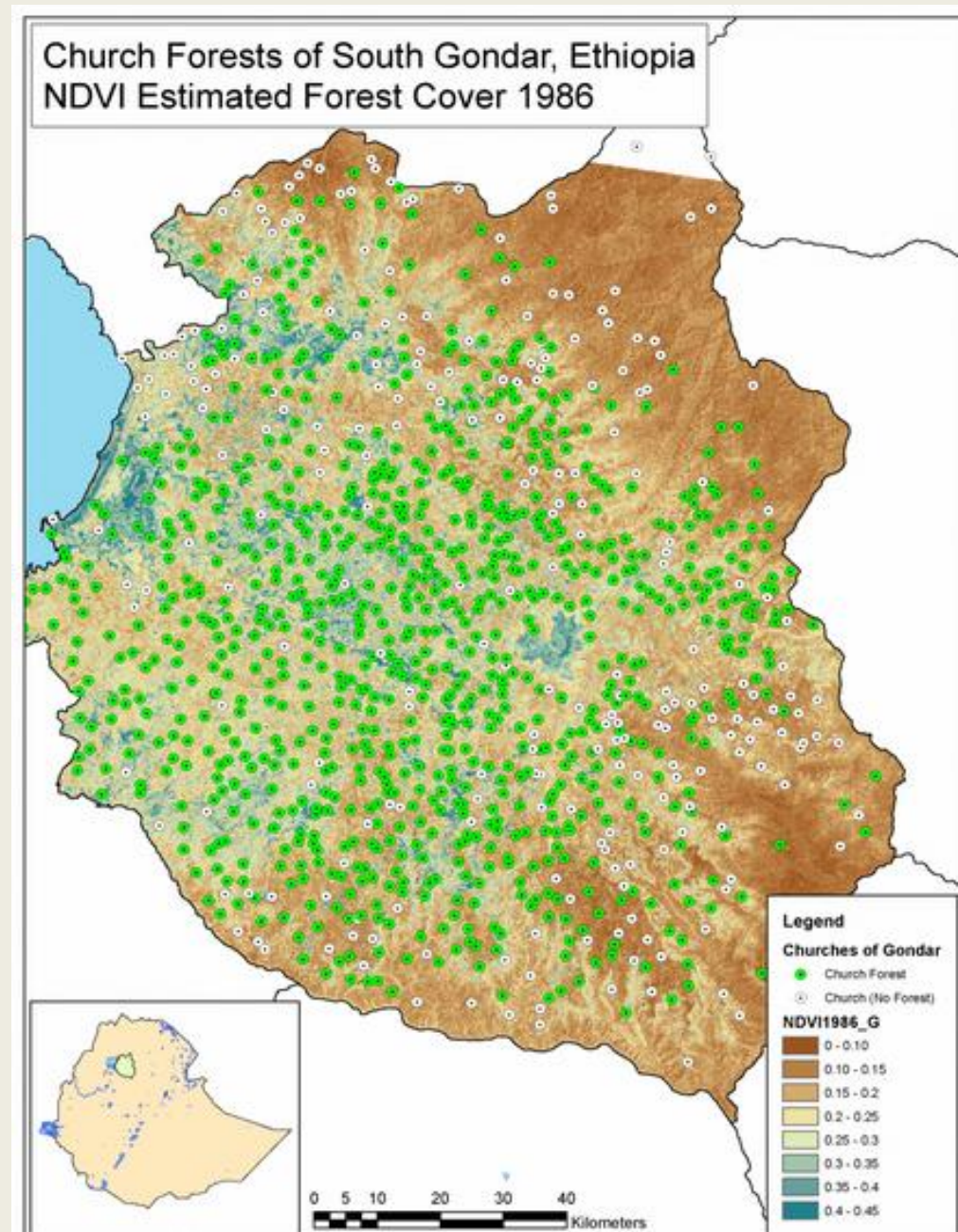
This goes far beyond instrumental values of nature in saving biodiversity, *including the ecosystem service of aesthetic value*

**e.g., The Island Fox and Distemper**





Also: The goal is **extremely long-lasting conservation**, and this can result from moral or religious conviction



## **In summary:**

- There is no deep, inherent conflict between different motivations for conservation
- But, there many reasons to think that anthropocentric motivations *alone* will be ineffective and insufficient to conserve most species or communities.

## **The most important questions to ask:**

- How to prevent short-term losses while planning for long-term – very long-term -- protection and motivation for protection?
- In a world of very limited resources, who will argue for the majority of nature, if conservationists decide that they too will prioritize human needs?