Connectivity of terrestrial protected areas

Indicator name | Protected Connected (ProtConn) Land
Indicator unit | Percentage of an area covered by protected connected lands
Area of interest | The indicator can be computed at regional, country and ecoregion levels. It is available in DOPA at the country and ecoregion levels.
Related targets | Sustainable Development Goal 15 on life on land
| Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 on protected areas
| Aichi Biodiversity Target 12 on species
Policy question | How well connected are the terrestrial protected area systems at the country and ecoregion level? This is a key question for measuring progress on the connectivity element of Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
Use and interpretation | The indicator can be used to assess:
  • The degree to which the spatial arrangement of Protected Areas (PAs) is successful in ensuring connectivity of protected lands.
  • How far countries or ecoregions are from the connectivity element of Aichi Target 11 of having 17% of the land covered by well-connected systems of PAs (Figure 1).
  • The contribution of different categories of land (protected, unprotected, transboundary) to the connectivity of PAs (Figure 2).
  • Where on the globe additional efforts are most needed in expanding or reinforcing the connectivity of PA systems.
  • Whether newly designated PAs provide effective connectivity gains in the PA system by acting as corridors or stepping stones between other PAs.
The current version of the connectivity indicator:

- Assumes that PAs are effectively conserved and managed as to ensure sufficient connectivity levels that allow the successful movement of species through protected lands.
- Does not consider the heterogeneity of the landscape matrix in between PAs, due to high variability in species responses; instead it aims at a more general assessment for the range of median dispersal distances observed for most species.
terrestrial vertebrates (1 to 100 km). The reference dispersal distance of 10 km is the one used for the ProtConn indicator values shown in DOPA.

**Indicator status**  Published in peer reviewed papers. The method regarding the connectivity at ecoregion level is described in Saura et al. (2017). The one describing the connectivity at country level is described in Saura et al. (2018).

The ProtConn indicator has been approved by the CBD mandated Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) as a new indicator to measure PA connectivity under Aichi Target 11.

**Available data and resources**

**Data available**  DOPA Explorer provides the ProtConn values at the ecoregion and country level for a reference species median dispersal distance of 10 km.

Specific interactive and downloadable maps with the ProtConn values at ecoregion and country levels for the different dates at which the indicator has been so far computed (June 2016, June 2018) will be made available in a later stage on the DOPA website (http://dopa.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/mapsanddatasets).

**Data updates**  Planned at least every two years, if possible annually.

**Codes**  All the connectivity indicators were calculated using GIS operations, R and the command line version of the software package Conefor 2.6 (Saura & Torné, 2009), updated at www.conefor.org.

**Methodology**

**Methodology**  The indicator considers the spatial arrangement, size and coverage of protected areas (PAs), and accounts for both the land area that can be reached within PAs and that which is reachable through the connections between different PAs. The analysis includes all designated PAs in the WDPA (polygons and buffered points) not smaller than 1 km², except UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, and is conducted for a range of median dispersal distances (1 to 100 km) observed for most terrestrial vertebrates. The indicator is calculated through network analysis, with the Probability of Connectivity and the Equivalent Connected Area as the underlying metrics. For more details see Saura et al. (2017, 2018).

**Input datasets**  The method described above uses the following input datasets:

**Protected Areas**
- WDPA of June 2018 (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2018)
  - Latest version available from: www.protectedplanet.net

**Terrestrial Ecoregions of the World**
- TEOW (2001). Terrestrial ecoregions of the world (Olson et al., 2001)

Country boundaries
- Global Administrative Unit Layers (GAUL), revision 2015 (2017-02-02).


References


Contact

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