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Biodiversity betrayal as nations fail miserably on conservation



Seychelles warbler: a rare conservation success story

David Pike/Naturepl.com

By Andy Coghlan

Almost everyone is bottom of the class. That's the best that can be

said for countries that signed up to an ambitious plan in 2010 to save [the world's dwindling biodiversity](#).

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 set internationally agreed conservation targets known as the Aichi biodiversity targets, but rich nations in particular seem to be failing miserably.

So said five major conservation charities ahead of the 13th meeting of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) in Cancun, Mexico, this week.

By now individual countries should have drafted detailed plans to conserve their biodiversity, but only half have done so.

Worse still, 90 per cent of the plans set targets that fall short of 20 global benchmarks. These include halting habitat loss, saving endangered species, reducing pollution and making fishing and agriculture more sustainable and nature friendly.

And only 5 per cent of countries are on track to meet the global benchmarks. A fifth of countries have either made no progress since 2010, or have retreated from the global targets.

“Unless countries significantly increase their ambition, the Aichi targets will not be delivered,” warns the assessment.

Best laid plans

“For the Aichi targets to be met, all countries must play their part,” says Sarah Nelson, head of international policy at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, one of the five charities that co-drafted the report. “The results from this study are therefore extremely concerning.”

The rich world came in for particular criticism, as only 5 per cent of

high-income countries have set goals as ambitious as the Aichi targets. Low to middle income countries have made greater efforts, with the host country Mexico providing one of the [more comprehensive plans](#).

“One silver lining is that least-developed countries are articulating a higher level of ambition than developed countries, demonstrating a different [development] pathway that better recognises the value of nature to economic growth and prosperity,” says Andrew Deutz from the Nature Conservancy, another of the co-authors.

Conservation-wise, there have already been notable success stories for some of the smaller signatories to the convention. The Seychelles, for example, have managed to [save the Seychelles warbler from extinction](#) – the population had collapsed to just 26 individuals in the 1960s. The birds were relocated to neighbouring islands, with [300 birds now on Cousin Island](#) in the Indian Ocean.

And by [eradicating alien species](#) including shrews, rats, cats and mongooses, Mauritius has successfully managed to save dozens of endangered species on the island of Ile aux Aigrettes.