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Source: Tropical Conservation Science, 4(3)

Published By: SAGE Publishing

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/194008291100400301>

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Editorial

Opinion matters in tropical conservation science

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The current issue of Tropical Conservation Science (TCS) contains ten papers: four opinion articles, one conservation letter and five research articles.

The opinion articles tackle four conservation issues in thought-provoking ways.

The article by Yong et al., highlights the role that recent big screen animation films, despite limitations in scientific value, can play in raising global awareness of tropical biodiversity issues.

Two additional articles deal with REDD+, a mechanism to compensate tropical countries for costs of biodiversity conservation and of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Waldon et al., argue that camera trapping for large and mesoscale mammals and acoustic monitoring for bats are an adequate model to monitor biodiversity in REDD projects. The other, by Collins et al., argues that biodiversity itself has tended to be treated as homogenous and that a new framework, taking into account the potential biodiversity beneficiaries of REDD+, should consider the dependence of a species' conservation status on habitat loss (pleiotropy) and the degree to which species may be able to generate premiums (charisma)

The fourth opinion article, by Bernard et al., comments on the impacts of bioethanol expansion on the species-rich Atlantic forest of Brazil. The authors argue that boosting crop productivity, rather than expanding plantations, may be a more environment-friendly solution for the region. They recommend that sugar and ethanol companies follow best

management practices to provide opportunities for restoration of biodiversity and environmental services in severely degraded ecosystems.

The conservation letter by Santos et al., focuses on the plight of the caatinga, a seasonally dry tropical forest in Brazil. Based on an assessment of the scientific literature, the authors argue that such the caatinga's state may be influenced by lack of scientific interest, compared with other tropical forests. The authors emphasize that Brazil, a top-ranking biodiversity country, supports less than a dozen academic programs in conservation biology, without a single program specifically devoted to the caatinga.

The five research articles cover the use of fire control as an inexpensive and simple means of promoting tropical forest restoration in Uganda (Omeja et al); measuring seed rain, advance regeneration and secondary succession in the Brazilian Amazon (Wieland et al); profiling bird communities in different habitat types in the lower Waria Valley in Papua New Guinea (Dawson et al); assessing the role played by edge-affected habitats and emergent trees and carbon storage in the fragmented Atlantic forest in Brazil (Dantas de Paula et al); and disturbance effects on the persistence of the endemic *Coffea kinhansiensis* in the Udzungwa mountains in Tanzania.

As a group, the five research articles contribute novel approaches to conservation. The papers add important data to our understanding of the natural process of rainforest regeneration, provide new information on the avifauna of little documented and biodiversity rich tropical regions, examine carbon storage concerns in degraded forest areas rich in endemic species, and highlight conservation concerns regarding an endemic coffee plant.

Published: 26 September 2011

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Cite this paper as: Estrada, A. and Butler, R. 2011. Opinion matters in tropical conservation science. *Tropical Conservation Science* Vol.4 (3):i-ii. Available online: www.tropicalconservationscience.org