

2010 and all that—looking forward to biodiversity conservation in 2011 and beyond

MARTIN FISHER

With the present penchant for turning dates into compound words for catchy headlines, next year rolls nicely off the tongue—twentyten. For conservationists twentyten will be a notable year: the 2010 Target of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 2009), the UN International Year of Biodiversity (UN, 2009) and the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (scheduled, perhaps fortuitously, for the 10th month of the year, in Japan). But what will all these matters mean for biodiversity conservation?

In 2002 the 6th Conference of the Parties to the CBD—a global treaty dating from the Rio Earth Summit in 1992—adopted a Strategic Plan with the mission statement ‘to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth’. The 2010 Biodiversity Target, as it became known, was later incorporated into Goal 7 (Ensure environmental sustainability) of the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2008). In 2002 the Target year may have seemed a long way off, and perhaps the statement was intended to be more political than quantitative as there was no baseline against which to measure it. But were there any conservationists who had a realistic expectation, even in 2002, that the CBD’s target could be achieved in some way?

Already, in 2006, the CBD’s *Global Biodiversity Outlook 2* report (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2006) noted that ‘biodiversity loss . . . is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, and certainly beyond 2010’. The report does, however, provide a glimmer of hope, noting that ‘with appropriate responses it is possible to achieve, by 2010, a reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss for certain components of biodiversity or for certain indicators, and in certain regions’. However, the somewhat underplayed key point is perhaps that ‘primary responsibility for meeting the 2010 target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss lies with Parties to the Convention’ or, if you wish, it’s all down to governance and politics. But the summary concludes on an upbeat note that ‘meeting the 2010 target is a considerable challenge, but by no means an impossible one’.

Undoubtedly some benefits have come as a result of the Target, especially with respect to indicators and assessment, mobilization of new audiences and adoption of new policy frameworks. It is, however, common knowledge that the

Target is not going to be met, and work is already underway to develop new and improved biodiversity indicators to measure progress towards whatever new targets are established beyond 2010, as Walpole & Herkenrath (2009) describe in this issue of *Oryx*. For those who would like to delve further into this and the CBD, the wealth of information, initiatives and relevant bodies can become confusing. Two initiatives are particularly important, however. The IUCN Countdown 2010 initiative (IUCN, 2009a) is a network of partners (916 as I write) ‘commit[ed] to specific efforts to tackle the causes of biodiversity loss’. There is a useful world map (IUCN, 2009b) that shows the geographical distribution of the partners but I was struck by their overwhelming concentration in Europe and the relative paucity of partners in Asia, South America and, especially, Africa, where there appears to be only two partners outside southern Africa. The second initiative is the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP, 2009) described by Walpole & Herkenrath (2009).

The next *Global Biodiversity Outlook* report is currently available online for peer review but not, so it indicates, citation or quotation. It is unclear, therefore, whether I can provide a link to it here. However, when it is published on the next International Biodiversity Day (22 May 2010; CBD, 2009b) it is unlikely to be a happy read. The conclusions of the report will presumably play an important role in guiding discussion at the October meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, and perhaps this will include not only an examination of new indicators from the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership but also new methods. The latter is a broad issue but one such method, direct payments for biodiversity conservation, is considered by Milne & Niessen (2009) in this issue.

In an Editorial in *Oryx* in 2006 (Fisher, 2006a) I drew attention to the fact that it was the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. Whilst there were a number of conferences based around the initiative and an important publication during the Year (Ezcurra, 2006) there does not appear to have been any visible follow-up beyond the Year itself. I speculated in another Editorial later in 2006 (Fisher, 2006b) that 2009 would be declared the Year of Biodiversity and would coincide with the launch of an intergovernmental panel on biodiversity (Loreau & Oteng-Yeboah, 2006). In late 2006 the UN General Assembly declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, foiling my prediction. The secretariat of the CBD is the designated focal point for the Year: ‘to cooperate with other relevant United Nations bodies, multilateral environmental agreements,

MARTIN FISHER Fauna & Flora International, Jupiter House, Station Road, Cambridge, CB1 2JD, UK. E-mail martin.fisher@fauna-flora.org

international organizations and other stakeholders ... to bring[ing] greater international attention to bear on the ... continued loss of biodiversity'. As with the 2006 Year of Deserts and Desertification, the main thrust appears to be education and awareness, with bodies such as the London Natural History Museum (NHM, 2009) promoting activities related to the Year's theme.

My second prediction also fell short but the proposal for an intergovernmental panel on biodiversity is worth keeping an eye on. The initiative started with *Diversity without representation* (Loreau & Oteng-Yeboah, 2006)—a call for an international panel of experts 'to move biodiversity science and governance forwards and find new ways of resolving the crisis'. The proposal became a consultative process towards an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMOSEB, 2007), and then an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2009a). The next key meeting for IPBES will be in October 2009 (IPBES, 2009b), hosted by the UN Environment Programme in Nairobi.

Any such new intergovernmental panel will undoubtedly have a close relationship with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is already incorporating effects on biodiversity in its assessment reports (IPCC, 2008). Similarly, the CBD has a Climate Change and Biological Diversity programme (CBD, 2009b) that recognizes 'the importance of integrating biodiversity considerations into ... national policies, programmes and plans in response to climate change'. In a related development the metric resonance of the ten in twentyten is being used to persuade us to cut our emissions by 10% in 2010. The 10:10 initiative (10:10, 2009) invites individuals, companies, education bodies and organizations to commit themselves to the target. The UK Government Cabinet has signed up, Fauna & Flora International has signed up, and I have signed up. Tenteen is of course a convenient, catchy slogan 'to put pressure on the politicians to cut Britain's emissions as quickly as the science demands' (10:10, 2009) but it is very useful in focusing the attention of conservationists and the general public alike on the issue and on the forthcoming December 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (COP15, 2009).

It is becoming clear that, notwithstanding any 2010 targets, public awareness campaigns or forthcoming meetings, we need to take a fresh look at how to set priorities and targets and how to motivate political processes for biodiversity conservation in 2011 and beyond. The magnitude of the task ahead will be laid out in *Global Biodiversity Outlook 3*. Twentyeleven is not nearly as poetical as twentyten. But it is then, once the findings of *Global Biodiversity Outlook 3* have been digested and absorbed, that 'moving from words to action'—the slogan of the Countdown 2010 initiative—really needs to carry some weight.

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