



Front-ending biodiversity: what SEA could deliver for New Zealand nature

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Environmental Defence Society

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EDS – what we do



Trent Bell

Formed in 1971, EDS is a long-running, Auckland-based NGO

Three key focus areas

- public interest litigation
- policy think-tank
- capacity building

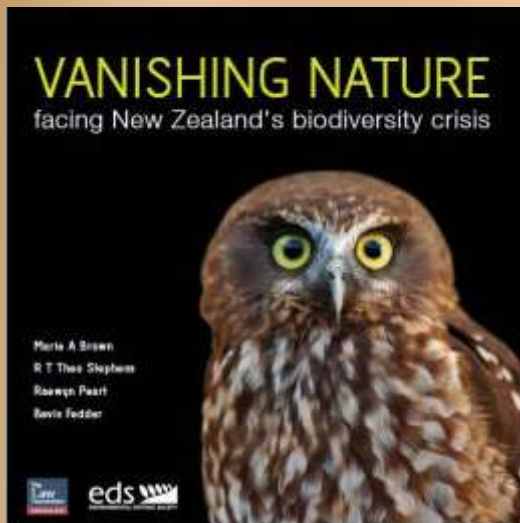
Biodiversity in decline

- Highest proportion of threatened species in the world
- NZ Biodiversity Strategy wanted to halt the decline by 2020
- From 2005-2015, 7% of species worsened in threat status, with far fewer recovering
- What's going wrong?



Angela Simpson

VANISHING NATURE



Marie A Brown, RT Theo Stephens,
Raewyn Peart and Bevis Fedder (2015)
Vanishing Nature: facing New Zealand's
biodiversity crisis

RRP \$45.00



Photo of Whisper at Wingspan by Bryce McQuillan Photography

Key (proximal) pressures

- Habitat removal
- Habitat fragmentation
- Invasive pest plants and animals
- Climate change
- Ocean acidification
- Harvesting (eels, fish)
- Diseases



Bryce McQuillan

But if you take a closer look...



Bryce McQuillan

...you see that 'conservation problems' are actually political and economic problems...

“You cannot solve problems at the same level of thinking that created them”



Trent Bell

Power of private interests prevails over the public interest in nature conservation

Collective might of the good things is not enough to counter the bad

Business as usual provides only for ongoing losses

Profound and systemic change is required to protect biodiversity

Not inevitable: it's a choice



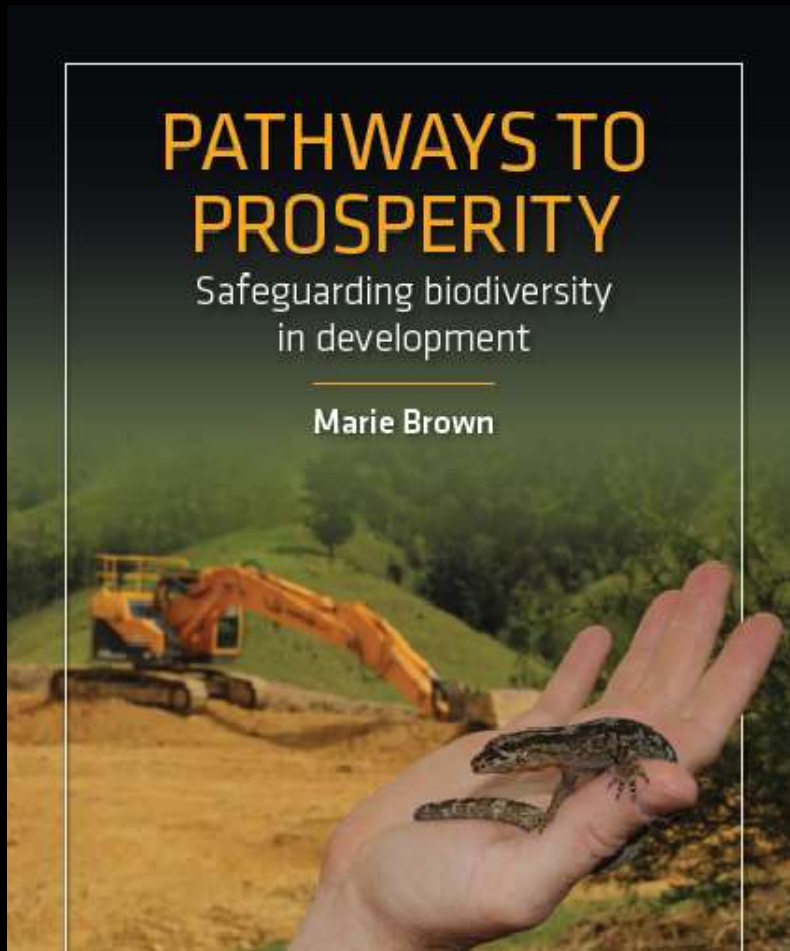
Every problem has a solution

Practical solutions rely on investment in science, research and conservation

Tactical solutions – more robust and effective law

Strategic solutions needed to align the interests of usually warring parties

Pathways to prosperity



Cover photo: Tony Jewell (EcoGecko)

Biodiversity in development is very vulnerable and rarely wins when pitted against economic interests

Incentives for conservation are tiny compared with incentives for harm

A lot of planning processes are slow and cumbersome and there may be more efficient ways to get outcomes for nature outside of the traditional

Four key areas focussed on...

- Planning for biodiversity protection
- National leadership on biodiversity
- Enhancing the implementation of existing tools
- Developing new tools for where there are gaps



John Leathwick

Biodiversity needs strategy

Biodiversity relies on strategy

A failure to plan for biodiversity protection in advance means any protection that does eventuate is usually:

- Costly
- Inefficient
- Of limited ecological value in context
- Fails to address cumulative effects



Brian Cutting

Current 'strategies' often not strategic...

- Tend to ignore complexity of context and other players
- Nobody who thinks they are already 'doing strategy' will see the need for more
- Communicating current shortcomings takes a lot of energy due to low practitioner knowledge
- Providing tools and guidance is the best first step, to demonstrate the value-add but long term, explicit provision for SEA in New Zealand is needed



Angela Simpson

What it might look like

SEA (objectives, overarching guidance and standardised processes to promote integrated management)

Conservation
legislation
(CA1987,
WA1953,
MMPA1978,
MRA1971 etc)

Planning and
environment
(RMA1991,
LGA2002,
LTA1998 and
ETS etc)

Other relevant
legislation
(CPLA1998,
LA1948,
HA1956)

Four things SEA could achieve

1. Providing an overarching direction for environmental management
2. Streamlining the interaction of different legislation
3. Ensuring efficient public interest safeguards
4. Providing a framework for monitoring of outcomes



John Leathwick

Providing an overarching direction

- If we don't know where we are going...
- Conflicting mandates detract from high level goals (all of them)
- Power imbalance governs outcomes
- Objective-led law and policy implementation would help to resolve conflicts and help the bigger questions get asked



John Leathwick

Streamlining the interaction of different legislation



- Lots of law and a lot of it doesn't talk to other law very well
- Some laws act within the same context but have no formal relationship
- An overarching framework could direct interaction to maximise efficiency and manage power imbalance

Ensuring efficient public interest safeguards

- As a rule, the 'nearer' to the site the harder it generally is to protect the public interest
- Biodiversity protection best addressed at a strategic level
- Systematic conservation planning can help plan here (impacts and offsets)



John Leathwick

Providing a framework for monitoring of outcomes

- A failure to monitor and evaluate policy and planning outcomes is well-noted
- Measurable goals to guide action and measure progress against are in short supply
- Genuinely communicating the state of nature needed to build social mandate



John Leathwick

Questions?



Bryce McQuillan