

Present Realities and Future Hope

A Christian Perspective on
Biodiversity Conservation



Helmeted Honeyeater

Lichenostomus melanops cassidix



Biodiversity

Ecosystem diversity

Species diversity

Genetic diversity



Conservation Status

Habitat loss & fragmentation

Over-exploitation

Invasive species

Disease

Pollution

Species extinction

Population growth & consumption

Illegal wildlife trade

Global climate change



Conservation

1. Species conservation

- Genetic studies
- Captive breeding & re-introductions
- Population monitoring



Conservation

2. Habitat management

- Habitat protection
- Habitat expansion
- Habitat restoration





Christians, Conservation and the Helmeted Honeyeater

- ▶ What motivates you to be involved in biodiversity conservation?
- ▶ What expectations do you have for the future of biodiversity?

A Christian Perspective on Biodiversity Conservation

- ▶ 1. Some Foundational Principles
- ▶ 2. Understanding the Present Realities
- ▶ 3. Working in the Present with Hope for the Future

Biodiversity Conservation: Some Foundational Principles

- ▶ Origins
- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Value
- ▶ Tenure
- ▶ Nature
- ▶ Management



The origins of biodiversity

- ▶ Biodiversity is the creation of a rational, wise, intelligent and personal God
- ▶ Biodiversity is not the result of purely physical, material and impersonal processes

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
(Genesis 1:1)*

*But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.
(Jeremiah 10:12).*

The purpose of biodiversity

- ▶ Planned
- ▶ Revelatory
- ▶ God-glorifying
- ▶ Essential for mankind

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." (Genesis 1:29-30)

The value of biodiversity

- ▶ Derived from God
- ▶ Determined apart from mankind
- ▶ Not determined by mankind

And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:24-25)

The tenure of biodiversity

- ▶ God's ownership

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; (Psalm 24:1)

- ▶ Appointed stewardship

The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind. (Psalm 115:16)

- ▶ Delegated authority

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)

The nature of biodiversity

- ▶ Diverse
- ▶ Productive
- ▶ Sufficient
- ▶ Sustainable

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(Genesis 1:29-30)*

The management of biodiversity

- ▶ Subdue and rule
- ▶ Use and influence
- ▶ Work and care
- ▶ Study

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The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15)

Christians and biodiversity conservation

- ▶ What motivates you to be involved in biodiversity conservation?
- ▶ What expectations do you have for the future of biodiversity?

Biodiversity Conservation: Understanding the Present Realities

- ▶ Mankind's rebellion against God and the fall into sin
- ▶ The curse placed by God on the earth in response to mankind's sin

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."
(Genesis 3:17-19)

Biodiversity Conservation: Understanding the Present Realities

- ▶ The impacts of God's curse
- ▶ The influence of fallen humanity
- ▶ The combined effects
- ▶ The persistent tension
- ▶ A realistic view



Biodiversity: The impact of God's curse

- ▶ Reduced productivity
- ▶ Reduced sufficiency
- ▶ Reduced sustainability
- ▶ Reduced biodiversity

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Biodiversity: The influence of fallen humanity

- ▶ Enmity with the Creator
- ▶ Corrupted mind
- ▶ Corrupted morality
- ▶ Confused identity

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. (Romans 1:18-23)

Biodiversity: The combined effects

- ▶ A corrupted dominion
- ▶ A degraded land
- ▶ A loss of biodiversity

Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: “There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. ²There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away. (Hosea 4:1-3)

How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished. Moreover, the people are saying, “He will not see what happens to us.” (Jeremiah 12:4)

Biodiversity: The persistent tension

- ▶ Biodiversity frustrated
- ▶ Biodiversity in bondage to decay
- ▶ Biodiversity groaning in expectation

For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that^[h] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Romans 8:19-22)

Biodiversity conservation: A realistic view

- ▶ A response to the fall
- ▶ A response to frustration and decay

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Biodiversity Conservation: Working in the present with hope for the future

- ▶ A Christian obligation
- ▶ A Christian motivation
- ▶ Aims and expectations
- ▶ Challenges for Christians



Biodiversity conservation: A Christian obligation

► Responsibility for stewardship

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:28)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:15)

Biodiversity conservation: A Christian motivation

- ▶ Jesus Christ the creator, sustainer and redeemer
- ▶ Future hope in Jesus Christ

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Colossians 1:16-20)

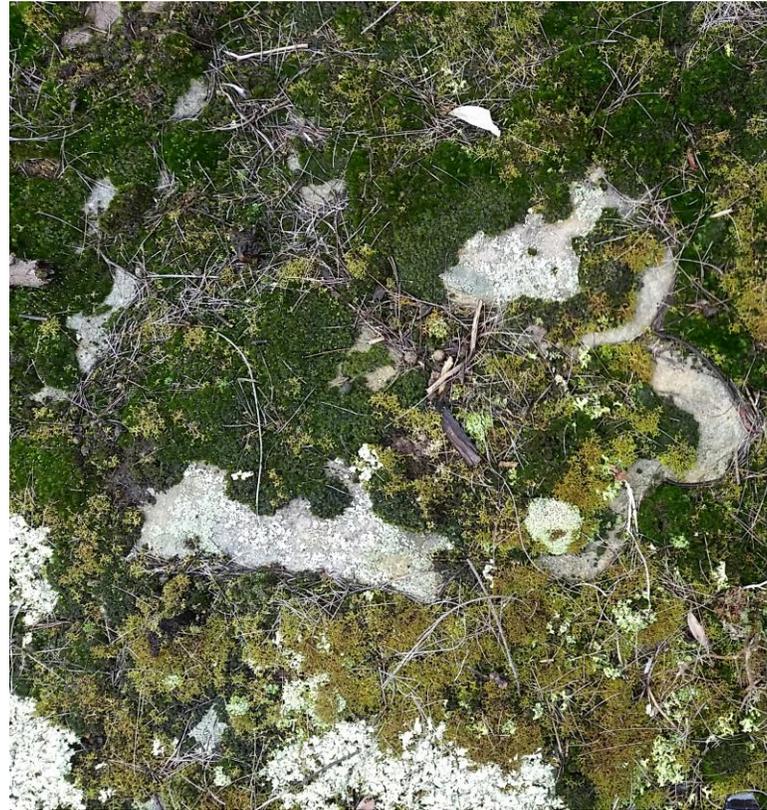
Biodiversity conservation: Aims and expectations

- ▶ Unrealistic aims and expectations
- ▶ Realistic aims and expectations



Biodiversity conservation: Challenges for Christians

- ▶ A need for leadership
- ▶ A need for engagement
- ▶ A need for creativity



Biodiversity Conservation: Review and discussion

- ▶ What motivates you to be involved in biodiversity conservation?
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