

## Forum

### On participatory biodiversity monitoring and its applicability: a response to Yoccoz *et al.* and Rodríguez

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Rodríguez (2003) and Yoccoz *et al.* (2003) acknowledge our evidence that integrated scientific and participatory methods for monitoring biodiversity are effective in strengthening management of land and resources (Danielsen *et al.*, 2003) but Rodríguez questions whether this approach is replicable outside the Philippines. Locally-based biodiversity monitoring systems involving non-scientists in assessments have been established, and are already leading to conservation actions, in terrestrial, marine and freshwater ecosystems in at least 10 other developing countries on all three tropical continents (data set available from the authors; see also a forthcoming special issue of *Biodiversity and Conservation*).

This is not surprising as most developing countries fulfil the key criteria for where this approach should have the strongest potential. In the majority of developing countries the sharing of the management of protected areas with local communities, or at least community participation in resource management, forms a part of official government policy. In most of these countries, rural people live inside or adjacent to some of the protected areas and depend on forest and wetland products from those areas (e.g. Saberwal & Kothari, 1996). In addition, chronic underfunding of protected areas seems to be the rule rather than the exception (James *et al.*, 1999).

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From one country to another there will be differences, such as in terms of the management objectives for protected areas and the relevant species and resource uses to be monitored. Integrated scientific and participatory monitoring methods must be tailored to the specific local, social and ecological context. It is unlikely that there is a 'one size fits all' solution.

We concur with Rodríguez (2003) on the great need for more research, but a lack of information should not prevent us from using the available information to take action and from making meaningful use of already existing human resources. Although we agree that integrated scientific and participatory methods for monitoring biodiversity need to be supplemented by in-depth monitoring of selected habitats and species, we maintain that our findings in the Philippines reveal a fundamentally important and globally applicable, simple and cost-effective approach for improving management of biodiversity in developing countries.

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