

# Mind the gap



**The biodiversity literature is rife with geographic, taxonomic and linguistic gaps; *Nature Reviews Biodiversity* aims to shine a light on these gaps in authoritative narrative reviews.**

Threats to biodiversity are escalating in number and magnitude, which makes the upcoming decade a pivotal time for progress on the biodiversity crisis. Reviews have an important part to play in research and policy-making cycles. However, the ability of a review article to provide a strong synthesis depends, in part, on the completeness and accessibility of the underlying literature being reviewed. A well-known issue in biodiversity research is that information on species distributions and the volume of associated publications are biased towards regions with more funding for scientists – particularly those working on taxonomic descriptions. These pervasive biases complicate the ‘stories’ that can be told about the origins and distributions of, and threats to, biodiversity. Rather than brushing these difficult facts aside, *Nature Reviews Biodiversity* asks authors to grapple with these biases by identifying geographic gaps in the reviewed literature and suggesting meaningful ways to fill them. A [Comment](#) in this issue by Cardoso, on behalf of a new consortium, introduces a multi-institution collaboration that bridges research capacity gaps between the USA and South Africa and uses a combination of remote sensing and local field studies to shine a light on biodiversity knowledge gaps in the Greater Cape Floristic Region, a global biodiversity hotspot.

Another important gap emerges from the fact that important biodiversity knowledge published in non-English-language literature is infrequently cited in reviews or included in meta-analyses. In this issue, Berdejo-Espinola and Amano [discuss](#) the importance of language diversity in authorship teams that are synthesizing evidence and suggest practical ways to improve the integration of knowledge documented in non-English languages in reviews and biodiversity assessments. Indeed, from the outset and as a small step towards improving the representation of non-English literature, *Nature Reviews Biodiversity* encourages authors to expand their author team to include contributors who can read and cite relevant literature published in other languages. We hope

this practice will evolve over the years and become a more common element of inclusive science and publishing.

In terms of scientific content, many of our reviews will focus on key advances from fundamental topics such as the evolutionary origins of biodiversity, the processes that govern and maintain biodiversity, and the conservation interventions to protect biodiversity. In this issue, a [Review](#) by Ribas and colleagues examines how the Amazon river network affects terrestrial biodiversity patterns in the region, how the network has changed over time and how it might develop in the future. A [Review](#) by He and colleagues focuses on coastal wetland ecosystems, the biodiversity they support, the factors that affect their resilience and the effective conservation levers for maintaining them.

Perspectives and Comments will be more forward-looking than Reviews, and will offer new ideas about a topic or how to move past barriers that inhibit progress. For example, a [Perspective](#) by Chaplin-Kramer and team argues that contributions of wildlife to people have been underrecognized relative to the contributions of plants, within the broader concept of ‘nature’s contributions to people’. A [Comment](#) by Rillig puts forward the idea of ‘global change refugia’, land areas that are selected for protection because they are relatively unexposed to climate change and other anthropogenic stressors.

Also important to *Nature Reviews Biodiversity* is content that links biodiversity, the biodiversity crisis and human well-being. Humans are a part of – rather than separate from – ecosystems; discussions of the causes and consequences of biodiversity loss, as well as potential conservation interventions, should always consider the effects on people. A [Review](#) in this issue by Carlson and team articulates how biodiversity loss connects to human health because of links between biodiversity, infectious diseases and aspects of global change that affect them both. A related [Comment](#) by Lambertucci and colleagues calls attention to the growing risk that one disease, highly pathogenic avian influenza virus, poses to threatened wildlife.

We aspire to help the community to make progress on addressing the biodiversity crisis, with reviews that stimulate new research directions, summarize evidence of effective conservation actions and – hopefully – close some important knowledge gaps.

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