

Conservation Projects

What lessons have we learned?



“Wildlife management is really people management.”

Kellert (1994).



Levels of Operation

- Knowledge and science.
- The conservation management.
- The staff.
- The institutional structure.
- Public and political interactions.



- A common feature of many successful conservation projects is a charismatic leader that has a clear vision, can motivate staff and manage morale (U. Seal, pers. comm.).

Characteristics of a Leader



- Biological and operational skills
- Understands organisational and inter-organisational dynamics
- Prioritises the work by asking key questions
- High standards and expect high performance
- Orientated to hands-on staff management
- Respect expertise and happy to bring in experts from outside the project.

Managing Motivation and Morale

- Motivation and morale are closely linked.
- Motivation and morale cycles are common.
- All staff need to feel appreciated.
- Always acknowledge good work.
- Celebrate success.
- Learn from mistakes.
- Do not tolerate neglect.
- Understand incompetence.
- Blame culture de-motivates.
- Play to peoples strengths.



Managing Field Teams



Features of Field Teams

- Teams can be highly creative.
- Dream teams vs. dysfunctional teams.
- Do not follow rules of line management.
- Responsibilities are shared and members may compensate for each other.
- Teams develop organically.
- Ideal size 3-6 (5).
- Clear goals and competent leadership.



Setting Goals and Developing Plans

One step at a time!



“The highly complex step-down outlines and multiyear budgets that form the bulk of many traditional recovery plans are rarely useful and should be abandoned for lack of utility.”

Snyder (1994).

The restoration of populations is a creative process involving intuition, empathy and a keen sense of priority. Populations are not restored by following a bureaucratic recipe that attempts to achieve success by following plans and protocols.

The Planning Process

- **Long-term vision, clear and stable** (e.g. restoration of species).
- **Short-term plans, detailed, but flexible** from year to year depending on previous results.
- **Need to understand project development.**



Long-term Minimum Management



- For many island endemics need for long-term management.
- Necessary while the habitat is compromised.
- Need to develop the concepts and techniques of long-term minimum management.
- Captive management techniques being applied to wild/free-living populations.
- Better than maintaining species indefinitely in captivity.

Features of a successful project



- Species need their champions.
- Know your species.
- Understand its problems.
- Clear short term and long term goals.
- Stage by stage planning.
- Good leadership.
- Competent field teams.
- Small organisations more effective than large bureaucracies.