

# CONSERVATION SCIENCE IN OCEANIA

## Society for Conservation Biology Oceania 2017-2018 report



## Introduction to Oceania Section Strategy

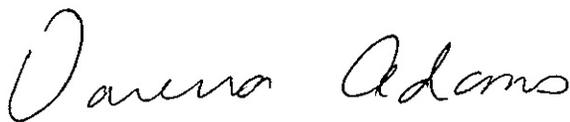
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The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) is a global community of professional conservation scientists and practitioners. The SCB has grown tremendously since it was founded in 1985. A major strategic initiative identified in 1999 led to the establishment of regional sections, and the evolution of SCB into an international society.

The SCB Oceania was created as part of this strategic initiative and has been functioning as a regional section of SCB with an elected independent board since 2005. The SCB Oceania region has five sub-regions, reflecting human cultures and colonisation: Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, New Zealand and Polynesia. In the past five years SCBO, among other activities, has: doubled its membership (250 members 2013 – 500 members 2018); held very successful conferences every two years (Darwin 2012; Suva 2014; Brisbane 2016; Wellington 2018); grown our regional chapters from 3 to 7; continued to support and grow the regional journal *Pacific Conservation Biology*, including a memorandum of understanding with CSIRO publications; and published conservation science statements (Weeks et al. 2016, PCB) and regional priorities (Weeks and Adams 2018, Conservation Biology).

SCBO has revised its strategic plan (Conservation Science in Oceania, 2018-2023) to build the impact of our Society in our region and to grow the programs and services we deliver to our members. This strategic plan has been based on the vision and goals of the global SCB organisation in its 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, adapted to reflect current opportunities and constraints in our region and our particular business model and membership needs. The plan provides strategic direction, implementation guidance and high-level parameters to guide SCB-Oceania's work through annual work plans.

The SCB Oceania has over 500 members around the region. Together this community of conservation professionals is working to advance the science and practice of conserving the Earth's biological diversity. By achieving the goals and objectives articulated in this plan, we believe we will enhance the impact of conservation science in pursuit of our mission.



Dr Vanessa Adams (President 2017 – 2020)

on behalf of the SCB Oceania Board, July 2018

# Introduction to the Oceania Section Strategy

SCB Oceania (SCBO) is a regional semi-autonomous section of the global Society of Conservation Biology. While the SCBO Strategic Plan is broadly based on the SCB Global Strategic Plan, we have adapted this plan, incorporating aspects of particular relevance to the Oceania region, its biological communities, and its human cultures.

## SCB-Oceania Mission, Vision, & Values

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A clear mission, vision for the future, and explicit values are critical to an organisation's accountability, integrity, and effectiveness.

### SCB Global Mission Statement

The Society of Conservation Biology advances the science and practice of conserving the Earth's biological diversity.

### SCB-Oceania Vision

We promote effective conservation in Oceania, underpinned by science. We achieve our vision by:

- Promoting, performing, and synthesising conservation science;
- Collaborating with governments, managers, conservation organisations, and communities;
- Improving the capacity of local communities to engage in conservation; and
- Influencing policy and management of biological diversity and ecosystems with conservation science and practice.

### SCB Oceania Organisational Values

The SCB and its members share the following common values:

1. A commitment to sustainability, recognising its importance for the long-term viability of human societies and environments.
2. The value of biodiversity – including ecological complexity – and evolutionary processes necessary to support all species including our own.
3. Human-caused extinctions in Oceania must decrease, particularly those caused directly or indirectly by ecosystem loss or degradation, overharvesting, climate change, invasive species, pollution, and disease.
4. Maintaining and restoring biodiversity is the responsibility of all people and their governments.
5. Improving the scientific knowledge base and building capacity of people in different communities and countries is critical to influencing decision-making.
6. The sciences, especially conservation sciences, perform a vital role in promoting understanding of the natural world and how human societies and actions can both positively and negatively affect it.
7. Policy and management decisions that affect biodiversity should be based on scientific evidence.

## **SCB-Oceania Goals & Objectives**

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We have one organisational goal (increased capacity) and two programmatic goals (Science and Education; Policy and Management). These goals aim to focus our efforts to effect change by increasing regional coverage and influence of conservation research and enhancing the use of that science in management, education, and policy.

The activities under each goal, detailed in the workplan for each year, will track our progress each year of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2023. This annual report details achievements against the annual workplan for the period July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018.

### **ORGANISATIONAL GOAL**

- **Increased Capacity:** SCB Oceania can increase its effectiveness by operating as a coordinated and coherent group that provides essential information relevant to our two major conservation programme goals. We find ways to increase our impact and role through communication mechanisms and through coordinated action by our members. We deliver meaningful scientific content and networking opportunities to our membership through mechanisms such as Conferences, associated workshops and short courses, and chapters. Our member expertise is expanded across a broad range of conservation areas to promote, support, and undertake conservation in our region. This is done by building our funding base and providing useful science and information, both of which help improve conservation outcomes.

### **PROGRAMME GOALS**

- **Conservation Science and Education:** Scientific research and knowledge is essential for understanding systems for conservation and informing policy, management, and education. Conservation science and related activities of our members – as well as others working in this area – support conservation action. Communicating science through education and capacity building programs, allow communities to understand the ecosystems, how they work, and what threatens them and enables them to better conserve them.
- **Policy:** Conservation and development policies significantly affect the long-term viability of ecosystems and their dependent organisms and processes. Science and its information are fundamental for evidence based policies produced by government and other organisations. Dissemination of policy-relevant conservation information, including responses to government and community initiatives that may positively or negatively benefit the environment are a focus for our engagement.

## I. Capacity

### Goal

**SCB-Oceania is recognised in the Oceania region for its role in conservation science and its impact on effective conservation. We encourage membership and active involvement, which allows us to increase our influence in our focus areas. SCB builds and maintains the organisational capacity necessary to operate.**

### Rationale and Strategic Impact

For effective input into conservation outcomes in our region, we must be recognised as credible by key decision-makers, potential partners, and the public. At the most basic level, powerful constituencies, interest groups, and institutions should look to us as a source of sound information that will help them resolve conservation problems. We will increase our interaction and effectiveness with the media, built on useful products from our key programme areas. We will have adequate capacity and direction. We will also focus on building reliable funding sources, an adequate operating reserve, committed and skilled staff, sound business practices, and an effective Board.

### Objectives

1. Build SCB Oceania as a strong semi-autonomous organization with registered and charity status in Australia.
2. Expand and diversify Oceania Section membership.
3. Hold an Oceania regional conference every two years in a different part of our region, focusing on key conservation issues.
4. Support the setting up and maintenance of Chapters in different parts of the region
5. Strategically integrate Section materials with the SCB's core identity, central messaging, and outreach efforts.
6. Develop internal policies to support strong governance and clarity of purpose consistent with our mission and vision.

### Annual Report against objectives:

As of June 30, 2018 SCB Oceania is a registered not for profit in Australia with an MOU with SCB Global that establishes it as a semi-autonomous organization. SCB Oceania achieved tax deductible DGR status in 2018 and will become a registered charity in the coming year. Strong internal policy work has been completed to ensure organization processes are clearly established and documented. A review is underway to understand how SCB Oceania can better support its Chapters.

## II. CONSERVATION SCIENCE & EDUCATION

### Goal Statement

**Scientific research, partnering with local and traditional knowledge, provides the essential platform for evidence-based policy, management, and education. Our conservation science is relevant and accessible, and provides solutions. We provide education, training, and capacity-building programmes in conservation to ensure that this science is available to the public, conservation managers, policy-makers, and communities.**

### Rationale and Strategic Impact

SCBO form part of a global community of natural and social scientists, managers, and policy-makers committed to using science to support conservation management and policy. Scientific information that informs and integrates with policy and management is vital to halting biodiversity loss and sustaining complex evolutionary and ecological processes. SCBO members conduct science for effecting biodiversity conservation through local action, management, and policy at local, national, and global scales. We make our work clear, understandable, accessible, and applicable. We integrate our science into education and training programs to ensure it is being used by relevant communities to solve conservation problems.

### Objectives

1. Develop an education initiative every two years that addresses the region's need for continuing education and training capacity.
2. Develop and build partnerships with organisations involved in conservation in Oceania (e.g. universities, research centers, NGOs) to enhance educational and outreach opportunities in conservation.
3. Award individuals recognising their contribution to effective conservation.
4. Associate and lift our profile at other relevant meetings (e.g. ecological and wildlife management societies).
5. Support *Pacific Conservation Biology* and promote the journal to top conservation scientists for publishing and access
6. Identify, publish, and disseminate Oceania research priorities periodically.

### Annual report against objectives:

#### **Objective 1: Regular SCBO workshop at our section conference**

Following from our commitment to provide professional development opportunities for our members and after the successful of previous offerings (How to give a great speed talk 2016 & Scientific writing and presenting 2014), in 2018 we offered a half day mentorship workshop

facilitated by an expert from the Australian Science & technology Institute and co-branded by SCBO. Workshop registrations were over capacity at 36 people and early feedback has been very positive.

We continue to mentor first time authors (particularly Pacific Island students) to help them develop manuscripts for publication in international peer-reviewed journals. Our goal is to develop a formalised system to undertake this work, in the meantime SJ has been supporting Pacific Island researchers.

### **Objective 2: Partner with organizations to enhance education and outreach activities.**

As in past years, we partnered with Chapters to provide funding to support them in hosting national Oceans Week (June) events. No chapter had capacity to run events this year, but we were able to support the Brisbane Chapter in a Twitter storm and helped provide content daily for the week. The Brisbane Chapter has submitted an application to the QLD government (Engaging Science) to run a public speakers night in a local pub. They plan to live podcast the event and we will support through our social media (Facebook and twitter).

We supported the annual Soapbox Science public communication event for the second year in a row through financial sponsorship. The events in 2016 (Brisbane) and 2017 (Townsville QLD) have featured SCBO members as presenters. Future models of support will include a co-hosting or co-sponsorship of the high profile event for female scientists.

### **Objective 3 - 4: Awards**

We supported a number of awards including a new offering of SCBO award for best poster at the 2018 Victorian Biodiversity Conference which was awarded to Lauren Twokorski for “Anthropogenic climate change: are little penguins feeling the heat?”. We promoted her award and work on the SCBO website and social media. The Oceania DSA, student awards, and PCB award will be announced in July 2018 at the

### **Objective 5: Support Pacific Conservation Biology**

We continue to run a special issue in PCB every two years in conjunction with a symposium at our regional conferences. The 2018 special issue is forthcoming and will be featured at the Wellington Conference. Work is underway to identify the 2020 theme. The 2020 special issue will include an editorial from the SCBO board and is aligned with Objective 6 (dissemination of conservation science within the region).

### III. CONSERVATION POLICY & MANAGEMENT

#### Goal

**Conservation and development policies significantly affect the long-term viability of ecosystems and their dependent organisms and processes. We provide science and knowledge to inform and improve such policies through engagement, access to scientific information, and responses to proposed government policies at local, national and international levels.**

#### Rationale and Strategic Impact

Conservation problems and their solutions benefit if the highest quality scientific expertise is applied to all local, national, and global policies affecting biodiversity. We will seek opportunities to make this expertise and knowledge available and relevant to the public, policy makers, and key conservation institutions at local, regional, national, and international levels.

Managers and policy-makers must be committed to the use of robust science, needed to effectively manage biodiversity at local, national, and global scales. This can be promoted through active and successful communication, as well as through developing frameworks such as adaptive management. The evidence base for effective conservation will continue to be a focus, given scarce conservation resources.

#### Our objectives

1. Generate and enhance interest, involvement, and capacity of conservation biologists to work effectively with policy stakeholders
2. Support development of policy response papers to major issues (see Kingsford et al. 2009), including submissions to government policies and inquiries where relevant.
3. Use conservation papers or special issues (e.g. *Pacific Conservation Biology*) in Oceania to produce a discussion papers on effective policy and management.

#### Annual report against objectives:

## 1. Contribution to International Conservation Policy (Megan Evans)



Editorial |  Free Access

### Roles for scientific societies to engage with conservation policy

Sarah E. Reed , Sarah L. Thomas, Angela T. Bednarek, Dominick A. DellaSala, Megan C. Evans, Carolyn Lundquist, Michael B. Mascia, Tsitsi Y. McPherson, James E.M. Watson

First published: 06 March 2018 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13092>

Megan Evans has acted as the SCBO representative of the SCB Global Policy Committee since 2016. A key project enacted by the GPC was a strategic analysis of how SCB should engage in global conservation policy. The SCB engaged a consultant to conduct interviews with members of SCB to elicit their views. Four possible roles were identified: policy advocate, science broker, science networker, and thought leader.

From the Editorial:

*As SCB implements its new strategic plan, we recommend that the global society invest in the science networker role. Successfully adopting this role will require dedicated staff and considerable time and funding (Bednarek et al. 2015). However, interviewees argued that a science networker role was the most strategic use of SCB's strengths and existing resources... the bottom-up nature of the science-networker role acknowledges the organizational structure and autonomy of SCB's regional sections, local chapters, and topical working groups to pursue different roles depending on circumstances and scales of policy engagement, as many already do.*

## 2. Application for Deductible Gifts Registration approved by the Australian Government

This approval allows SCBO to apply for grant funding without incurring tax costs. Further, we can also accept donations. SCBO was advised by the Environmental Defenders Office and proceeded with an application, setting up a separate account for management of funds and altering our constitution. We were careful to emphasise that we were predominantly involved showing that we were a research and education organisation. We are also careful about policy, given ongoing discussions about limiting the operating frameworks of charities.

### 3. Conservation Policy workshop at SCBO Conference in Wellington

#### Understanding and engaging with conservation policy



9:00am- 5:00pm, Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2018

Location: Room RHMZ02, Rutherford House,  
Pipitea Campus of Victoria University of Wellington

Many conservation scientists are interested in engaging with policy, but may not be sure where to start, or how they can most effectively contribute. This course aims to provide a “Public Policy 101” for conservation scientists who want the knowledge and tools needed to navigate messy policy processes.

The course will feature presenters working across the spectrum of policy, practice and academia who will contribute to the following topics:

- What is policy?
- Key legislation and conservation policies, national & local level governance (New Zealand focus)
- Stakeholder engagement
- Effective advocacy
- Working with the media
- Drafting a policy submission or policy brief

Presenters: Dr Megan Evans, Toni Love, Dr Fleur Maseyk, Corey Watts, Prof Richard Kingsford

25 attendees



