

LRWT: Towards a strategy to tackle ecological and climatic change

Outline of initial thinking by Mike Harley and John Clarkson (work in progress)

Background

Wildlife changes its abundance and distribution in response to climatic and other environmental changes.

Key challenge is to achieve positive future trajectories for change in the natural world.

Theoretical underpin - three key concepts

Deep ecology: need to understand how species, habitats and ecosystems might change in response to climate change and the limits of acceptable change to ecological and other natural processes.

Adaptive management: need conservation strategies to address the impacts of climate change at appropriate scales in time and space.

Environmental equity: need to operate with respect and ensuring justice for people and nature.

Practical considerations

Conservation actions are needed to address climate change impacts on species, habitats and ecosystems - and other natural processes.

Actions should embrace the dynamics/dynamism of ecological processes and be adaptive and responsive to ongoing temporal and spatial change.

Actions are needed to restore the connectedness and permeability of our landscapes.

Actions could include reserve-based experiments, such as the establishment of *refugia* or 'arcs' for threatened, rare or endangered species.

Adaptation processes and the outcomes and long-term impacts of conservation actions should be monitored and evaluated, and the learning disseminated widely to inform and assist others.

Changing mind-sets

Tackling the juxtaposed ecological and climate change emergencies will require a fundamental shift in nature conservation policy and practice.

This will also require a shift in the hearts and minds of those involved in the conservation movement, whether conservation officers, reserve managers or members of conservation organisations such as LRWT.

It will no longer be possible to preserve the *status quo*; conservationists will need to embrace a new dynamic in the natural world, accept gains, losses and movements, and promulgate the use of adaptive management as a vital new tool in the nature conservation tool-box.