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Making Spatial Ecology Relevant and Accessible to Conservation

Technological and methodological developments in the last 10 years have provided spatial ecologists with a formidable range of tools to describe, understand and predict non-uniform and non-random spatial patterns in the distribution of organisms and habitats. In particular, we can now generate high utility information in relation to: (i) the influence of landscape configuration on species and habitats, (ii) the magnitude, extent and consequences of human alterations to the environment, and (iii) the relative biodiversity trends at different sites and associated spatial priorities. These tools therefore allow us to render environmental data into information upon which conservation action *could* be based and evaluated. However, translating this 'ability' to generate information into meaningful conservation action has remained stubbornly difficult to implement across the sector. The reasons for this are many and varied. Some are structural (e.g. the need for capacity, funding and access to data within organisations), and some are strategic (e.g. the need for organisations to embrace new/improved methods). Simply, keeping pace with the current rate of change in key areas of spatial ecology and associated technologies also presents huge difficulties for many organisations. These issues can only be tackled through meaningful exchanges of information and ideas between those working with technological developments, academics working on new methods, and the conservation end-users of spatial ecology (practitioners). It was in this context that an international conference '*Spatial Ecology & Conservation*' was held in June 2014. This was the second meeting of this nature (now an annual event), and was designed to allow participants to review, discuss and evaluate the latest advances in spatial ecology and associated technologies, and how these could best be deployed to underpin conservation action. Importantly, the discussions were geared towards the identification of current gaps in spatial ecology, future needs and a range of potential solutions. A total of 58 oral presentations were made within six conference themes:

- Realising the full potential of remotely sensed data for conservation
- Understanding species' distributions
- Advances in mapping and analysing terrestrial and marine systems
- Decision support tools for conservation
- Selecting and Designating Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
- Training and professional development

These proceedings contain a selection of 21 papers that have been chosen from the core thematic sessions to reflect the breadth and scope of the key subjects and issues discussed.

Mark O'Connell
Director ERT Conservation, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL5 1RT
E-mail address: Mark@ERT-conservation.co.uk