

COVID-19 and Protected and Conserved Areas: Global snapshot, emerging scenarios, and a call for action

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COVID19 and protected and conserved areas

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EDITORIAL ESSAY: COVID-19 AND PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

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Developing capacity for a protected planet

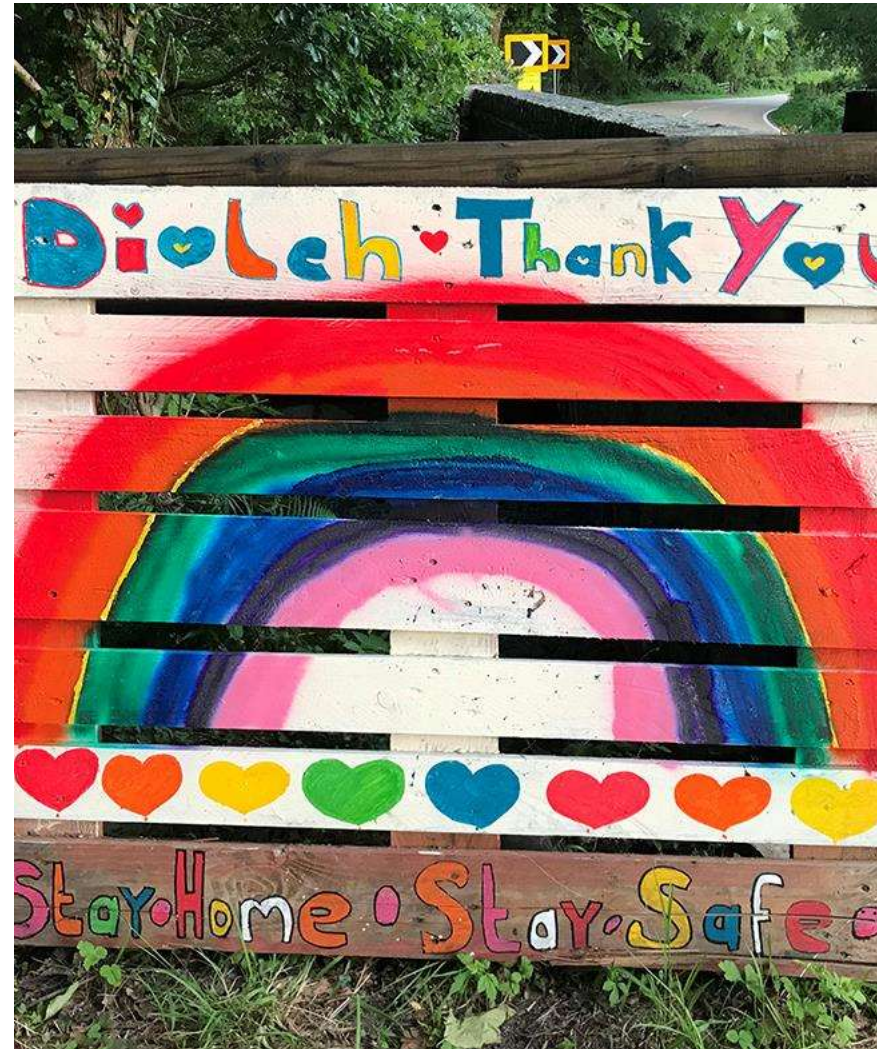
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Evolution of an Editorial Essay

- Started as a plan to document what we knew about impacts on COVID-19 on protected and conserved areas (PCAs) very early in the period of emergence of the pandemic
- Quickly became apparent that we should seek to do much more than this to respond to the implications of COVID-19 for PCAs.
- Enthusiasm to build a broad coalition across the conservation community – a Call for Action
- Editorial Essay provides background to the Call for Action




Pandemics and Protected and Conserved Areas: An interlinked relationship



- Wildlife serves as origin of over 70% of emerging zoonotic diseases
- Almost half zoonotic emergence events are driven by land use change and associated activities
- The large-scale conversion and transformation of natural ecosystems facilitate the 'spillover' of pathogens from wildlife to human populations
- Well-designed and managed networks of protected and conserved areas help to maintain intact natural habitats and ecological integrity
- Where protected areas are being established, or exist, alongside intensively used land, it is important to minimise edges, separate intensive land uses and wildlife, and manage for healthy functioning ecosystems.
- An awareness of disease dynamics should become a feature in the design and management of protected and conserved areas in the future.



Impacts of COVID-19 on protected and conserved areas

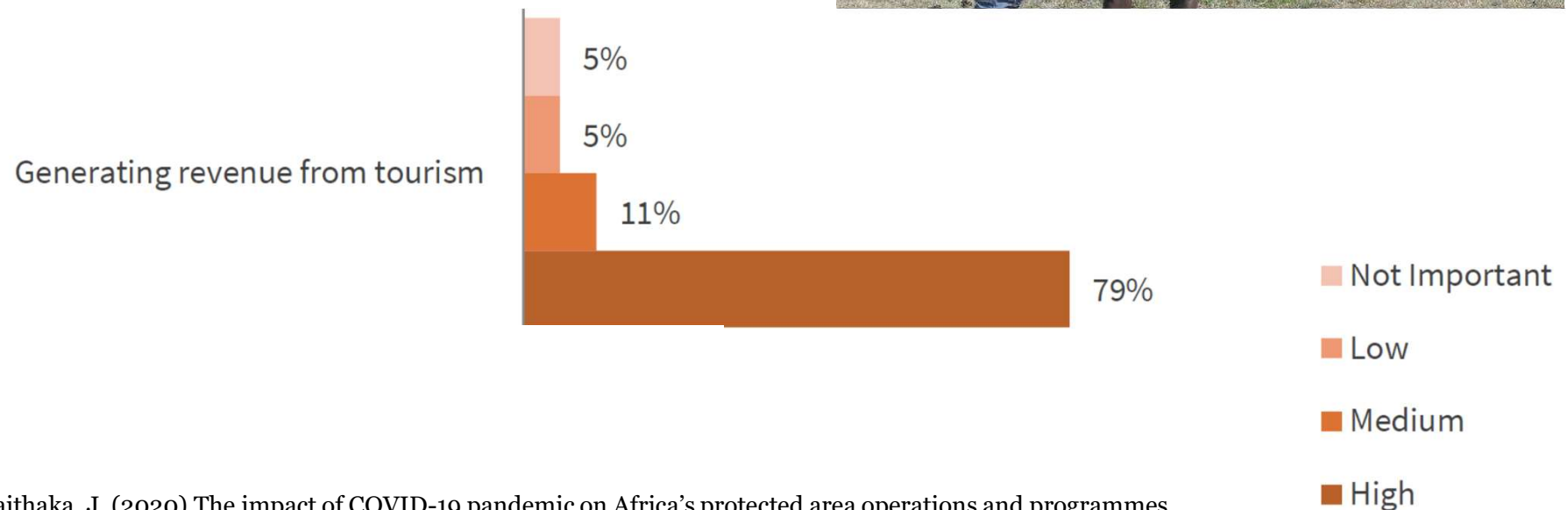


Economic impacts (eg budget cuts, tourism crash)


- Loss of significant income for PCAs and communities
- Reduced revenue and budgets for parks agencies
- Conservancies and community-based areas particularly impacted
- Average recovery time is over 19 months

Loss of revenue from cessation of tourism

- Pre-COVID-19 estimates
 - ▶ 8 billion visits to PAs
 - ▶ \$US600 billion direct expenditure
- Major impact on Agency revenue



Impacts of COVID-19 on protected and conserved areas



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Direct ecological impacts

- High-risk for non-human primates
- Positive, but probably temporary, benefits for sensitive wildlife species due to reduced human activity in PCAs

Management and enforcement impacts

- Reduced staff activity and vital management services, including ranger patrols
- Reports of increased poaching and illegal resource extraction in many countries

Impacts of COVID-19 on protected and conserved areas



Visitation impacts

- Most PCAs partially or completely closed to visitors
- Increased visitor pressure on those remaining open
- WHS fully closed in 72% of the countries with listed sites

Resource management impacts

- Reduced resources available for “non-essential” activities (fire management, human wildlife conflict management)
- Research, monitoring and recovery activities also on hold (e.g Australia)

Social and community impacts

- Indigenous people and local communities are highly vulnerable to COVID
- Reduced management presence in PCAs can encourage illegal resource exploiters who can infect otherwise isolated communities
- Reduced incomes and livelihoods

Policy challenges at national and regional level

- Reallocation of environmental funds to other priorities
- Emergency rollbacks to re-energize economies leading to PADDD events

Scenarios for protected areas emerging from the pandemic



A return to normal

- Medical breakthrough makes this a transient crisis
- Return to old patterns of production and consumption
- Environmental and social challenges remain unaddressed
- Delay in implementing 2030 global commitments
- Underfunding of PCAs continues

Global economic depression and decline in conservation

- Longer lasting recession
- Tourism reduced
- Economic growth at any cost
- Roll-backs of environmental regulations
- Scarce conservation resources
- Widespread destruction of nature increases risk of further endemics & pandemics

New and transformative relationship with nature

- Shift in humanity's perception of & relationship to nature
- PCAs central to economic recovery
- Higher ambition in global agenda for nature and climate
- Improved ecological health reduces risk of further endemics / pandemics

A Call for Action

Core principles:

- COVID-19 is a symptom of the wider environmental crisis
- We must commit and act to achieve a healthy, sustainable planet
- Protected and conserved areas provide broad benefits to society, but these are now under severe stress due to our societal response to COVID-19



A Call for Action



Rescue

- Maintain and invest in essential services
- Draw up and implement emergency plans
- Provide emergency funding
- Maintain monitoring
- Maintain existing laws



Recover

- Promote the health benefits of PCAs
- Integrate health into recovery plans for PCAs
- Create the foundation for sustainable finance
- Adopt a sustainable and equitable recovery
- Restore management capacity
- Avoid harm



Rebuild stronger

- Help avoid a new pandemic
- Address high-risk wildlife trade from PCAs
- Rights-based approaches
- Innovative funding
- Aspirational funding targets
- Strengthen the international framework for PCAs

Parks Issue 26.1 website activity since the issue was published



Published on 2nd June

Over 3000 downloads since then

ResearchGate Research Interest score of 25.8 - Top 1% of reads of papers listed on ResearchGate in 2020 and top 8% of all papers listed on that platform over all time

Positive signs

- **Green Recovery**

- ▶ Pakistan – Protected Areas Initiative; 15 national parks (7300 km², 5000 jobs , IUCN Green List
- ▶ New Zealand - \$1.1 billion, 11,000 jobs, invasive species control, jobs for nature, enhancing biodiversity protection



WCPA Task Force

- Co-Chaired by Mariana Ferreira and Rachel Golden Kroner
- Collect and analyze information on the impacts of COVID-19 on PCAs
- Develop, refine and promote the Call for Action
- Develop principles and good practice for PCAs across the three phases of the response to the pandemic
- Influence global policy meetings
- Promote a One Health approach to maintaining healthy ecosystems to governments, sectoral ministries, companies, human rights groups and others.



Special issue of **PARKS**

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- Linked to the work of the Task Force
- Being edited by Adrian Phillips and Brent Mitchell
- Targeted set of papers – will include results of regional studies of impacts
- Peer-reviewed
- Aim for publication in Jan 2021 in time for World Conservation Congress

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