

**Communicating Conservation Effectiveness:
Balancing Optimism, Trade offs, and Realism in Conservation Success Narratives**

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Supplemental Online Material 2: Results Tables

Table 1. Analysis of conservation success statements (n=45)¹.

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>n</i>	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
1. Sharing conservation success stories creates benefits for protected and conserved areas	0%	0%	0%	42%	58%	45	4	5	4.58	0.499
2. Sharing conservation success stories helps protected and conserved areas to enhance biodiversity education and awareness programming.	0%	0%	2%	44%	53%	45	3	5	4.51	0.549
3. Conservation success stories should be shared more frequently	0%	0%	7%	47%	47%	45	3	5	4.4	0.618
4. It is important to balance optimism and realism when communicating conservation success	0%	7%	4%	40%	49%	45	2	5	4.31	0.848
5. More resources are needed to share conservation success stories effectively	2%	0%	13%	36%	47%	44	1	5	4.27	0.872

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	<i>n</i>	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
6. Conservation success in protected areas is a topic we don't talk enough about	2%	4%	11%	44%	38%	45	1	5	4.11	0.935
7. Sharing conservation success stories helps protected and conserved areas to achieve biodiversity targets and objectives.	4%	0%	22%	51%	22%	45	1	5	3.87	0.919
8. Sharing conservation success stories helps protected and conserved areas to enhance ecological integrity outcomes.	0%	2%	42%	36%	20%	45	2	5	3.73	0.809
9. It is challenging to find successful conservation outcomes to profile	13%	22%	24%	29%	11%	45	1	5	3.02	1.234
10. It is challenging for protected and conserved areas to effectively communicate successful conservation outcomes.	7%	33%	18%	38%	4%	45	1	5	3	1.087
11. We should be cautious about communicating conservation success because this may reduce the perception of risk and urgency.	18%	36%	18%	20%	9%	45	1	5	2.67	1.243
12. We should be cautious about communicating conservation success because positive outcomes may regress in the future	18%	44%	9%	27%	2%	45	1	5	2.51	1.141

¹Experts evaluated statements using the following scale: 1-strongly agree, 2-somewhat disagree, 3-neither agree nor disagree, 4-somewhat agree, 5-strongly agree.

Table 2. Conservation success statements, rank ordered, practitioners and academics (n=45)^{1,2}.

Statement	Academic				Practitioner				Significance
	N	Mean	Median	SD	N	Mean	Median	SD	<i>P</i>
1. Sharing conservation success stories creates benefits for protected and conserved areas	18	4.39	4	0.502	27	4.70	5	0.465	0.04
2. Sharing conservation success stories helps protected and conserved areas to enhance biodiversity education and awareness programming.	18	4.50	4.5	0.514	27	4.52	5	0.58	0.91
3. Conservation success stories should be shared more frequently	18	4.39	4	0.608	27	4.41	4	0.636	0.92
4. It is important to balance optimism and realism when communicating conservation success	18	4.39	5	0.85	27	4.26	4	0.859	0.62
5. More resources are needed to share conservation success stories effectively	18	4.33	4.5	0.767	27	4.23	4	0.951	0.71
6. Conservation success in protected areas is a topic we don't talk enough about	18	4.22	4	0.647	27	4.04	4	1.091	0.52
7. Sharing conservation success stories helps protected and conserved areas to achieve biodiversity targets and objectives.	18	3.67	4	0.907	27	4.00	4	0.92	0.24
8. Sharing conservation success stories helps protected and conserved areas to enhance ecological integrity outcomes.	18	3.61	3.5	0.85	27	3.81	4	0.786	0.41

Statement	Academic				Practitioner				Significance
	N	Mean	Median	SD	N	Mean	Median	SD	<i>P</i>
9. It is challenging for protected and conserved areas to effectively communicate successful conservation outcomes.	18	3.11	3.5	1.278	27	2.93	3	0.958	0.58
10. It is challenging to find successful conservation outcomes to profile	18	3.50	4	1.043	27	2.70	3	1.265	0.03
11. We should be cautious about communicating conservation success because this may reduce the perception of risk and urgency.	18	2.83	3	1.339	27	2.56	2	1.188	0.47
12. We should be cautious about communicating conservation success because positive outcomes may regress in the future	18	2.61	2	1.145	27	2.44	2	1.155	0.64

¹Experts evaluated statements using the following scale: 1-strongly agree, 2-somewhat disagree, 3-neither agree nor disagree, 4-somewhat agree, 5-strongly agree.

²Mean values not sharing the same subscript are significantly different at $p < 0.05$ in the two-sided test of equality for column means.

Table 3. Advantages when communicating conservation successes (n=39).

Theme	Subtheme	Sub-theme	Sub-theme	Theme	Theme
		n	%	n	%
<i>Builds Awareness and Appreciation</i>	Builds awareness and support for PAs and conservation	13	15%	25	28%
	Raises profile of PAs as effective conservation tool	7	8%		
	Builds acknowledgement and appreciation	5	6%		
<i>Improves Mental Health and Wellbeing</i>	Inspiration and motivation	8	9%	18	20%
	Builds morale for staff and practitioners	5	6%		
	Improves mental health and wellbeing of the public	5	6%		
<i>Enhances Engagement</i>	Public engagement	7	8%	16	18%
	Leverage success to increase fundraising	5	6%		
	Bring in new stakeholders and collaborators	4	5%		
<i>Advance Knowledge of Solutions</i>	Enhanced education and outreach	8	9%	15	17%
	Build knowledge bank of solutions	7	8%		
<i>Demonstrates Value of Conservation</i>	Demonstrates to funders that investment works	7	8%	14	16%
	Demonstrates to the public that conservation works	4	5%		
	Builds internal support from managers and executives	3	3%		
Total		88	100%	88	100%

Table 4. Disadvantages when communicating conservation successes (n=34).

Theme	Subtheme	Sub-theme	Sub-theme	Theme	Theme
		n	%	n	%
<i>Oversimplification</i>	Difficult to communicate success without proper context	7	19%	15	41%
	Creates the perception that the work is finished	4	11%		
	Greenwashing	4	11%		
<i>Negative Pressure</i>	Visitor management issues	7	19%	11	30%
	Strains resources and personal	4	11%		
<i>Diverts Attention</i>	Lack of context perpetuates misconceptions	3	8%	6	16%
	Draws attention from work that still needs to be done	3	8%		
<i>Increase Conflicts</i>	Disagreement among stakeholders	3	8%	5	14%
	Limitations on resource use	2	5%		
Total		37	100%	37	100%

Table 5. Conservation stories that should be further elevated (n=39).

<i>Theme</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Quote</i>
<i>Conservation is Dynamic and Interconnected</i>	10	26%	“Complex stories that unfold over time, where there can be one step forward and one (or more) step(s) back in a non-linear path. Success stories that involve multiple prongs and people working in seemingly different arenas. More humble stories where we didn't get it right at first. Stories about courage and remaining strong in the face of adversity. Stories that talk about trade-offs -- there isn't a perfect solution for everything, and we need to be realistic and transparent about that.”
<i>Collaborations & Partnerships “We're in this together.”</i>	9	23%	“Success stories about conservation efforts that we should share are ones that show collaborative efforts among the 'community' of all interests that are necessary to support the system as well as individual values of protected areas. This is important to put a 'face' on the landscape perspective of how the system's pieces fit / function together, who's involved and to understand what each protected area's values are and how they may be affected over time by use as well as external pressures.”
<i>Indigenous-led Conservation</i>	9	23%	“Other than focusing on areas conserved, the success of conservation relationships being built between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is quite important. Conservation is always under resourced, so this can be assisted with the expertise of Indigenous peoples.”
<i>Visitor Impacts</i>	7	18%	“Visitors often result in unintended outcomes, such as flocking to an area to see a rare bird resulting in the bird abandoning the area. Education is key to teach people how to behave in a site.”
<i>The Role of Protected and Conserved Areas</i>	7	18%	“I think it is important to give the message that protected and conserved areas have a mandate of maintaining ecological integrity, even if they also serve a recreational purpose. And that maintaining that integrity goes beyond simply defining a protected area, but that active management is required and is ongoing. Bright spots are really milestone achievements, and the work always continues.”

<i>Theme</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Quote</i>
<i>Whole of Society Approaches</i>	6	15%	“It can help provide incentive for people to keep doing the difficult things. On an individual level, they want to know how their actions and choices can help to make a difference. And on a collective level, they need to see and lean into their power to hold governments, businesses, and leaders accountable. It can help to bring more people to the movement and shift power appropriately about who makes decisions.”
<i>Landscape Connectivity</i>	6	15%	“How conservation decisions, small or large, affect people or at least highlight the intertwining nature of what impacts environmental decisions have on the local/regional scale to people right now, living and working and playing in those places.”
<i>Hope and Inspiration</i>	5	13%	“Spreading stories of "hope" (solutions-oriented) is effective in getting people to change their behaviour.”
<i>Nature Connections</i>	5	13%	“People that feel personally and emotionally connected to a "natural" area are more likely to engage in effective land stewardship, and I think there's an opportunity for the communication of conservation successes to foster that type of connection. Both recognition of the extent of impact for a PA, paired with communication of the successes will make visitors feel as though they are part of that trajectory.”
<i>Individual PAs or lesser-known PAs</i>	3	8%	“I think that it's important to further elevate the success stories that focus on more unfamiliar species and regions. Often, we celebrate success in areas that are well known and close to us, but I think that by telling success stories in less frequented and remote areas, we might be able to both highlight the success and increase familiarity and ability to relate to the more remote areas and species of Canada. In a massive country like Canada, I think that it's important to find ways to get people thinking about the 90% of it that's remote and that most Canadians may never see.”