



The James
Hutton
Institute

Safeguarding Natural Capital

Our work helps to protect the air, water, soil, land and the living organisms which underpin the life support systems of our planet – all these elements are critical for human health and wellbeing.

Safeguarding our natural capital is one of the biggest global challenges facing us – one that is hugely complex and costly. Global biodiversity, for example, is being lost about 1000 times faster than it has been for millennia, largely as a consequence of human driven environmental changes.

Losses may be caused by habitat destruction, land conversion (such as for agriculture and development), spread of invasive species, climate change, pollution and a host of other factors.

Prioritising actions and understanding their costs and benefits are essential,

yet the combination of risk, uncertainty, and lack of understanding makes it difficult to identify and agree which elements of natural capital are most critical to safeguard.

As such, we need better scientific understanding as well as coordinated action to make real progress in the

safeguarding of natural capital across the globe.

Our integrated ecological, environmental, social and computational research is providing new information to progress this understanding and guide decision making.

We aim to understand the relationships between natural capital, the functions of our different ecosystems and the services they provide for human health and wellbeing.

These 'ecosystem services' include waste disposal, resilience to climate change, water supply, biodiversity conservation and soil quality, for example.

We also need to be able

to value these services appropriately. Central to this aim is our work to help improve the effectiveness of methods used to value our natural capital and the services which it provides, in order to help governments prioritise action for effective application within the different policy and governance systems across the world.

Professor Alison Hester
Theme Leader

Malcolm Coull
Knowledge Exchange Contact

Tel: +44 (0)844 928 5428

Fax: +44 (0)844 928 5429

info@hutton.ac.uk

www.hutton.ac.uk