

Protected Areas, Buffer Zones and Chimpanzees

Research presentation by Beth Kaplin

Protected areas are the key tool we have to protect biodiversity today. However, researchers and managers are only just beginning to understand the importance of the land use type around a protected area to effective biodiversity conservation. In this study, we used the chimpanzee as a case to understand how different land use types and buffer zones contribute to conservation goals in the park. Chimpanzees serve an important role in ecosystem services as seed dispersers, contributing to forest regeneration, and they are also important for tourism and revenue generation to support the protected areas. They are also listed as endangered by the IUCN. Certain buffer zones, such as pine plantations, are attractive to chimpanzees and they will use these areas, while they avoid tea plantations surrounding the park. However, tea plantations showed remarkable quantities of human and cattle feces, potential vectors of disease transmission. The type of land use or buffer zone will have a profound effect on protected area effectiveness. The challenge is to unite human needs in the matrix surrounding a protected area with the conservation goals, which may often not be aligned.

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