Prioritising conservation on the ground
Identifying threats to protect multiple species
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

The more seed dispersers in the rainforest, the more likely trees continued to germinate.

The forest trees would increase in abundance.

The loss of bird seed dispersers, like species from the Bulbul family, may well put forests at risk.

They were clearly important to the survival of tree species.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

It was crucial to focus on endangered species with a high probability of extinction.

If we lost these, what would be the impacts of that loss?

How would it affect the web of life they are part of?

Network models were often most appropriate for helping answer these questions.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

But to do it properly, there was no substitute for raw data.

The more information that was available, the more accurate the results.

Seed dispersers, like the Piping Guan, lived high up in the trees of the Caribbean rainforests.

Its relatives are of great importance to ecosystems elsewhere in the Neotropics.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

They dispersed large seeds that other species could not. The case for conservationists was how do you prioritise actions on species?

How do you convince other stakeholders to work towards similar goals?

People learned that protecting species involved all stakeholders from the start. We needed their investment in data and resources for protecting species.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

But we needed political will too. We needed to engage stakeholders, including:

- government
- indigenous communities
- non-governmental organisations
- industry

Producing policies all countries bought into was a challenge.

The Aichi Biodiversity Targets achieved this to a degree. While 192 countries signed up to them, progress was slow or stagnant in some regions.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

We wanted to increase understanding of shared dependency with other species and habitats.

But this was not as straightforward as coming to a general agreement.

We strived to find a greater harmonisation between different datasets.

We needed this visualised according to planning and strategies for saving species. There needed to be consistency among global databases.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

This was easier said than done, depending on who we engaged with and the kind of world people wanted to live in.

People only listened if they understood how it affected them or the places they lived and worked in.

It made sense to protect large apex predators like the jaguar, tiger or wolf.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

They kept species in check that live in the understorey of forests.

Keystone species like the African elephant were important to woodlands.

These are ecosystem engineers that keep areas open and contribute to savannah landscapes.

They also dispersed seeds of large trees.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

If they went away, then we'd lose this ecological function.

There were no other species available for the job.

Keeping these species and conserving them in the ecosystem safeguarded biodiversity.

We could create a planet that humans and non-humans wanted to live in.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

This was ultimately the goal of having biodiversity targets in the first place.

Biodiversity was crucial to the function of human societies.

It was in itself a resource that was increasingly growing scarce.
Prioritising conservation on the ground - identifying threats to protect multiple species

Another important step in species conservation was prioritising threats, and:

• understanding where they came from
• their causes
• why we should tackle them, especially if threats concerned multiple species

Conservation action plans would often protect individual species. But, in fact, protecting multiple species was what we needed to do.
Key points for conservation and policy

- Identify the threats to multiple species. Identify actions to protect them from or mitigate threats.

- Keep information consistent. Create a universal standard for species and other data to compare them globally.

- Species conservation planning should have 'rigorous flexibility'. We should base this on sound information and critical thinking.

- Get stakeholders involved from the start. This gets them engaged and invested in protecting species.

- Protect multiple species together, not just one or two. Recognise other targets at the same time, and figure out how to tackle them.