**Barometer of life: sampling**

**Collen B** & Baillie JEM. (2010) *Science*329: 140

Ben and I started the Indicators and Assessments Unit.  We agreed we would create a group to define the status and trends of the planet so that the public and policy makers could make informed decisions - we promised each other we would commit at least two years to get it started.  Ben, Georgina and I developed a robust approach to assess status and trends of a taxonomic group by randomly selecting 1,500 species and assessing their conservation status repeatedly through time.  Some found this threatening as they thought donors would be less likely to fund their work to assess every species if the conservation status of the entire group were already known.  In early 2010 a paper appeared in *Science* stating that we needed to invest a lot more in species assessments if we want a true barometer of life, and that we needed to conduct comprehensive assessment to obtain this information.  Although we were partnering with IUCN on the sampled approach - there was no mention of it - and it was clearly the most obvious way to develop a barometer of life using the IUCN Red List.  Ben was a little put out (which was rare) and immediately put pen to paper.  When I came into the office the next morning there was a draft of the response in my inbox.  I asked Ben if he thought it was too direct and he said it is just the facts - he was right.

We worked in the same lab for 5 years and Ben went on to run the group before leaving for UCL.  Ben’s work really did change the way people think about the status of the planet and his papers and books will be referenced for years to come, but it was his positive compassionate character, and commitment to supporting and helping those around him achieve their full potential that will have the greatest impact.  We all learned a lot from Ben.  I hope he knows that our vision is still going strong and soon we will have those real time biodiversity indicators that we always dreamed about.

Ben, we are grateful to have had you in our lives and we miss you.

Professor Jonathan Baillie

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