



Conservation economy

HOW CAN WE DIVERSIFY INCENTIVES AND INCOME STREAMS FOR CONSERVATION?



Baviaans Kloof World Heritage Site.
Photo © Grobler du Preez



The Baviaanskloof – (Dutch for “Valley of Baboons”) – lies between the Baviaanskloof and Kouga mountain ranges. The easternmost point of the valley is some 95km NW of the coastal city of Gqeberha, previously named Port Elizabeth.






Garden Route National Park.
Photo © Sara Winter.

 The Garden Route National Park is a national park in the Garden Route region of the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces in South Africa. It is a coastal reserve well known for its indigenous forests, dramatic coastline, and the Otter Trail.



African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), Addo Elephant National Park.
Photo © Jonathan Pledger

 IUCN Conservation Status:
Endangered

 Addo Elephant National Park is a diverse wildlife conservation park situated close to Gqeberha in South Africa and is one of the country's 20 national parks. It currently ranks third in size after Kruger National Park and the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.



Dr Julia Baum is a systems thinker and storyteller with a passion for social-ecological research, conservation work, communication, and entrepreneurship. She holds a M.Sc. Geoecology (KIT, Germany) and a Ph.D. Conservation Biology (UCT, South Africa) and is the Founder of PLCnetwork of the Southern Hemisphere. Julia has extensive experience and skills in the fields of private and community conservation, strategy and planning, partnership development, and conservation enterprise consulting.

Why is it that the conservation, protection, and sustainable use of biodiversity and our natural resources are seemingly a contradiction to societal and economic growth?

Can we not interlink both sectors and develop a new, shared perception and solution?

There are key aspects to conservation which function directly in monetary and economic ways.

In most cases, it is a costly endeavour, and it must compete with other land uses and anthropogenic activities. However, there is often a lack of understanding of commercial concepts and how to apply them to achieve long-term success in conservation. Similarly, there is a deficiency of valuing our natural capital as an asset in the corporate world.



CASE STUDY 1:
Eden to Addo Corridor Initiative

The vision of Eden to Addo (E2A) is to link three mega-reserves in South Africa: the Garden Route National Park, The Baviaanskloof World Heritage Site, and the Addo Elephant National Park. This will be achieved by implementing natural corridors to protect and restore the integrity of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and foster sustainable livelihoods.


Thus far, the E2A team has initiated the protection of over 50 000 hectares of natural corridors, which are under private stewardship. The owners and managers of these land areas need to ensure the continued maintenance of their properties for conservation. Since establishing these corridors is a major challenge and commitment in financial terms, concepts and business models are needed to create the required incentives and rewards.

For example, the Inqua Trail on the Robberg Coastal Corridor provides guide training and employment for people from the Kranshoek community as well as supports local service providers for transport and catering.



Read more about the Eden to Addo Corridor Initiative here:
<https://edentoaddo.co.za/>



 **WATCH THIS!**
Scan the QR code or visit <https://youtu.be/EGdZEZBUO4M> to watch the video: 'Eden to Addo Great Corridor Hike'.



Quad bikes.



Game capture safari.

Finding solutions...

Until now, conservation action and any related efforts rely mostly on government support and incentives, philanthropic partnerships, grants and donations, or the investment of individuals such as private landowners. These are all necessary to initiate and sustain conservation areas, projects, research and more; however, in many regions, they are not sufficient to secure efforts.

Diversifying income streams is an essential strategy to ensure the long-term viability of conservation efforts globally. Our very living depends on natural resources, and we need a more dynamic model to navigate the future.

Exciting options are available for combining conservation with societal well-being and economic success. While some of these are proven and better known, others are currently being explored and designed.

The better known...

Ecotourism is a common and powerful revenue-generating

model for conservation efforts since it promotes sustainable travel activities for visitors to experience and appreciate nature. Many ideas can be developed, including building eco-lodges, and offering nature trails, guided tours, or other activities that are respectful of the environment.



At PLCnetwork of the Southern Hemisphere, more than 100 members of our unique conservation networking platform provide incredible examples of ecotourism destinations. In addition to accommodation and activities, many members incorporate educational programmes and supporter opportunities, even though they are under financial pressure and need further security to continue stable operations.

Generally, **educational programmes** can generate income by offering learning experiences such as field sessions, workshops, or training courses to students, professionals, and the public.



Sable antelope (*Hippotragus niger*) horn measurement and veterinary care.



Membership and supporter programmes offer exclusive benefits to individuals or organisations supporting the conservation cause. Some ways to create a sense of community and loyalty among supporters include newsletters, guided tours, discounts, or access to special events.



CASE STUDY 2:

Mattanu Private Game Reserve, Northern Cape, South Africa.

The Kriek family bought the farm in 1991 and developed it as a breeding area for rare antelope species. In 2006 Mattanu opened its doors to the public as an eco-tourism destination.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://mattanu.com/tours-activities-mattanu/> to read all about eco-tourism activities offered by Mattanu Private Game Reserve.



WATCH THIS!

Scan the QR code or visit https://youtu.be/5TBey9jI9Nw?si=5gKfK_9nKeO95vfO to watch the video: 'Mattanu Private Game Reserve'.



Luxury thatched-roof self-catering accommodation.

“ Diversifying income streams is an essential strategy to ensure the long-term viability of conservation efforts globally. ”

The lesser known...

There is great capacity in forging **partnerships and collaborations** with businesses, corporations, or non-profit organisations that share similar conservation goals. This entails collaborating on projects, creating joint initiatives, or exploring options for co-funding conservation programmes, such as installing renewable energy operations or developing a coral gardening organisation.

Merchandise and licensing greatly boost innovation in conservation activities by creating branded or topic-related accessories or souvenirs, featuring conservation messages and iconic species, or

telling a unique story through the product. By exploring licensing agreements with companies interested in using conservation-themed products, a portion of the proceeds can thus be channeled back into conservation efforts.

Designing and implementing Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes (which includes Carbon Offset Programmes), is somewhat more complex. Through these methods, landowners and communities receive financial incentives for conserving forests, wetlands, or other ecosystems that provide valuable services like carbon sequestration, watershed protection, or biodiversity conservation.



Roan antelope (*Hippotragus equinus*).

 IUCN Conservation Least Concern



Luxury safari tents.





Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Djuma Game Reserve, Sabi Sand, Greater Kruger, South Africa.

Photo © Alto Oosthuizen



IUCN Conservation
Vulnerable



CASE STUDY 3:

Wildlife Conservation non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)

WildEarth, a wildlife streaming service, is minting NFTs linked to prominent animals like the female leopard, Tlalamba, on the Djuma Game Reserve in South Africa.

Buyers get special access to images, video, and information about creatures like Tlalamba via an app, where they can also talk with other NFT owners. They even get voting rights in the names of Tlalamba's cubs, and first dibs on their future NFTs. Watch the video!




LEARN MORE!


Scan the QR code or visit
<https://wildearth.tv/nft/nft-green-paper/>


The evolving...

Over the past few years, the emergence of new financial mechanisms such as **blended finance, bonds, credits, NFTs, or impact tokens and certificates** have shown the potential to play a role in diversifying income streams for conservation. Such income streams are mainly technology-backed and can represent different topics and assets including endangered species conservation, reduction of plastic pollution, reforestation, to name a few.

 **Blended finance** is an approach that blends sources of capital such as grants, private or concessionary loans and more to de-risk otherwise risky projects. This improves investor returns and is a way in which e.g., larger development banks seek to distribute capital.

 **Bonds** (also known as “green bonds”) are a fixed-income instrument specifically issued, often by governments or organisations, to finance projects or activities that are earmarked for addressing environmental challenges.

 **Credits** can be sold to companies or individuals seeking to offset their environmental impact (such as Carbon Credits which quantify carbon sequestration as a means to counteract CO₂ emissions) or to invest in biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration by valuing the conservation action and ecological services provided (Biodiversity Credits of various forms).

 **Non-fungible tokens (NFTs)** are unique digital assets that can represent ownership or proof of authenticity for various types of digital or physical items, for example, planted trees.

 **Impact tokens and certificates** are blockchain-based and aim to generate funds for social and environmental causes. Individuals or organisations can purchase these tokens and certificates, which represent a specific conservation action and function as investment vehicles. Read more in Wilder World News Snippet 6, page 46.

“ The success of these mechanisms relies on market demand and the willingness of individuals, companies, and investors to participate. ”

While all these mechanisms are promising, it's important to be mindful of considerations such as ensuring transparency, avoiding greenwashing, and maintaining alignment with conservation goals. Additionally, the success of these mechanisms relies on market demand and the willingness of individuals, companies, and investors to participate. Therefore, careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and evaluation of their effectiveness are necessary when incorporating them into conservation action.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://wildearth.tv/nft/> to learn all about WildEarth's Wildlife Conservation NFTs.



Encephalartos whitelockii is a species of cycad that is native to Uganda. Photo © Mariusz S. Jurgielewicz

IUCN Conservation Status: Critically Endangered

Encephalartos whitelockii is endemic to a single location, where it forms one of the largest and most impressive cycad populations in Africa in Kamwenga District of the southwestern part of Uganda (possibly the largest single cycads colony in Africa).

Last, but certainly not least, a future solution is to develop conservation enterprises, which operate with the primary goal of promoting conservation and sustainable use of natural resources while generating economic and social benefits for people locally.

“ A future solution is to develop conservation enterprises. ”

These enterprises help to incentivise people to participate and take a more active role in protecting their environment. Conservation enterprises identify and develop sustainable ventures and value chains that directly align with sustainable objectives. In many cases, they even function with conservation action itself as their core feature.

Such services and products include green roofing with native plants, sustainable wood products, medicinal plant harvesting,

eco-friendly handicraft products, seaweed cultivation, and conservation tech equipment. Some ways to combine conservation and entrepreneurship include:

1 Native plant nurseries can provide an opportunity to promote the use of indigenous plant species for landscaping and restoration projects. This business model can involve growing and selling native plants, consulting on plant selection for specific projects, or offering planting services.



CASE STUDY 4: Lukango Tree Conservancy Limited (LuTreeCo), Uganda.

LuTreeCo is an African social enterprise that conserves trees and shrubs that are native to tropical Africa. Threatened species as determined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), have priority.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://lutreeco.com/> to learn more about Lukango Tree Conservancy

2 Bees are critical pollinators for many crops and ecosystems, but they are also facing threats such as habitat loss, pesticides, and disease. Creating a business model around beekeeping could focus on aspects such as producing and selling honey, beeswax products, and pollen, as well as providing pollination services for farms and gardens.

3 Natural and organic beauty products are becoming more popular due to concerns about chemicals in conventional products and a growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly options. These include products made with natural ingredients such as plant oils, essential oils, and botanical extracts, as well as packaging made from recycled materials.



LuTreeCo has acquired multiple *Encephalartos whitelockii* plants.



“ A conservation economy refers to an economic system that places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability and the wise use of natural resources. ”

Balanites aegyptiaca (also known as the Egyptian balsam).



Desert Date Co. is a social enterprise working with over 200 Women and Youths in the desert date value chain in Uganda and South Sudan. They have trained these women to collect desert date nuts from desert date trees (*Balanites aegyptica*). They press desert date oil from these nuts and are using the oil as ingredient for luxurious skin care products.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://plcnetwork.co.za/member/115/Desert-Date-Co/> to learn more about Desert Date Co.

Creating a conservation economy

A diverse portfolio of income streams helps reduce reliance on any single funding source and increases the resilience and viability of nature conservation initiatives. Through designing and implementing new solutions, we are on the path of building a conservation economy.



A conservation economy refers to an economic system that places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability and the wise use of natural resources. This is an alternative approach to traditional economic systems that prioritise economic growth and development at the expense of the environment. It ensures that resources are not depleted, and that people locally are not negatively affected.



Bees and Trees are saving nature and mending the climate by giving farmers an extra source of income in beekeeping and tree growing.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://plcnetwork.co.za/member/117/Bees-and-Trees-Uganda/> to learn more about Bees and Trees, Uganda.



PLCNETWORK OF THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

PLCnetwork of the Southern Hemisphere is a unique networking platform and consulting firm with a passion for private land and community conservation across South America, Africa, and Asia & Pacific.

Our vision is to achieve a paradigm shift in the conservation sector towards a global conservation economy for inclusive transformation.

Our mission is to apply a *Conservationpreneurship* approach to implement community development and nature-based solutions with conservation actors.



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 @plcnetworksh
 plcnetworksh
 PLCnetwork of the Southern Hemisphere
 info@plcnetwork.co.za

In a conservation economy, conservation is at the core of the value chain. And with its goal to reconcile economic development with environmental protection, it recognises the interdependence between healthy ecosystems and long-term human well-being. ■