

Using ecosystem services for better decision-making

Title At the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP11 in Hyderabad, India, Dr Krishna Chandra Paudel (Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation in Nepal) has launched a report entitled *Conserving biodiversity and delivering ecosystem services at Important Bird Areas in Nepal*. The report—the first of its kind—presents the results of a three-year Darwin Initiative study conducted by Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Partner) who piloted a new practical “toolkit” for assessing ecosystem services (the benefits that nature provides, such as clean water and crop pollination) at 27 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across the country. It is designed to help decision-makers recognise the value of nature, increasing awareness of the consequences of human actions, and ultimately leading to a more sustainable future in which biodiversity is conserved and the benefits from ecosystem services are better realised and more equitably distributed. “The Government of Nepal has long recognised the economic, health and social benefits provided by ecosystem services, particularly to the poor communities whose day-to-day living directly depends on them. However, it’s clear that we are losing biodiversity and we need a more integrated approach to ecosystem management. This report is an important milestone in improving our understanding of how to tackle this issue”, said Dr Paudel at the Side Event at which the report was launched. The data presented could contribute to the revision of Nepal’s National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (NBSAP)—a process that has already been initiated. At the conference, the BirdLife delegation is urging Parties to recognise the importance of updating and implementing NBSAPs in line with the CBD’s new Strategic Plan 2011–2020, and to develop national indicators to measure progress towards the 20 “Aichi Biodiversity Targets”. “Assessing ecosystem service delivery at IBAs can help to demonstrate the benefits of conservation beyond species”, said Ishana Thapa, Senior Conservation Officer, Bird Conservation Nepal and one of the research team. “We believe that by effectively managing the network of IBAs, we can also safeguard ecosystem services which are vital for local livelihoods. In our recent study we have established a baseline which will help us to monitor progress towards Target 14 which has a focus on ecosystem services”, she added. Bird Conservation Nepal plans to work with the Government to build on the recommendations put forward in the report. The challenge now is to integrate these into key policy sectors so that the true value of Nepal’s diverse ecosystems are taken into account when considering, for example, management of the protected area system, the expansion of the tourism industry and plans for climate change adaptation. Visit the [Ecosystem Services Spotlight](#) to find out how other BirdLife Partners are also engaging in ecosystem services work around the world and demonstrating how conserving sites, their habitats and species, provide benefits that are directly relevant to people.