


PRACTICE INSIGHTS

Twenty Years of Evidence-Based Conservation

Evidence-based practice in consultancy settings is a win-win for business and nature

Thomas B. White^{1,2}  | Graham W. Prescott¹ | Benjamin Jobson¹ | William Morgan³ |
Rebecca K. Smith³ | Malcolm Starkey¹ | Laura J. Sonter¹

¹The Biodiversity Consultancy, Cambridge, UK

²Department of Biology & Leverhulme Centre for Nature Recovery, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

³Conservation Science Group, Department of Zoology, Cambridge, UK

Correspondence

Thomas B. White.

Email: tom.white@thebiodiversityconsultancy.com

thebiodiversityconsultancy.com

Handling Editor: Harriet Downey

Abstract

1. Businesses increasingly need to assess their impacts and dependencies on nature, develop targets and robust strategies for reducing impacts and contributing to nature recovery. Businesses often hire consultants to provide assurance that approaches taken are legitimate and likely to deliver environmental outcomes. As such, consultants have an important responsibility to ensure the advice they provide is based on the best available evidence.
2. As part of the Evidence Champions programme run by Conservation Evidence [University of Cambridge], The Biodiversity Consultancy has been working to formalise an approach for evidence use across the organisation.
3. In this 'Practice Insights' article, we first outline the importance and multiple benefits of evidence-based practice for consultancies. Secondly, we describe the broad topics covered by an organisational approach to evidence use—detailing the approach developed and actions taken by The Biodiversity Consultancy.
4. *Practical implications.* We conclude by outlining key recommendations and lessons learned from our approach, including discussing how to embed evidence-based strategies into core processes, address data gaps and uncertainties and manage situations where evidence collation becomes time-consuming or costly—highlighting ways to prioritise evidence gathering and use effectively. We hope these insights obtained from our collective experience provide practical value to other consultancies seeking to integrate evidence-based action into their workflows, as well as for businesses aiming to ensure that biodiversity strategies are grounded in robust, science-informed practice.

KEYWORDS

business biodiversity management, evidence-based conservation, mitigation, prioritisation

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2026 The Author(s). *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of British Ecological Society.

1 | THE MULTIPLE BENEFITS OF EVIDENCE-BASED ACTION IN BUSINESS SETTINGS

The private sector faces growing expectations to deliver on conservation goals and financing (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021), and to disclose their impacts, dependencies and strategies (European Commission, 2024; TNFD, 2023). Often lacking the capacity in-house, and wanting the assurance that assessments and actions are legitimate, businesses hire external organisations—including consultancies—for their advice (White, Mukherjee, et al., 2023). Consultancies can thus be an important leverage point in facilitating effective private sector action to address biodiversity loss. This 'Practice Insights' article is written from the perspective of a specialist consultancy firm, but we note that other organisations (e.g. NGOs, research institutes) provide similar advisory services where learnings may also be applicable.

To develop effective strategies for addressing biodiversity impacts, consultancies need access to information on a range of topics. This can include information on: (1) the biodiversity present at specific locations, (2) the business activities occurring there, (3) the impacts of those activities on biodiversity, (4) the appropriateness of different data collection techniques and (5) the feasibility and effectiveness of mitigation and conservation actions to address impacts in specific ecological and social contexts. This information underpins two key products that consultants deliver for businesses: impact assessments of business activities (from direct operations and through supply chains and investments), and action plans/strategies

for mitigating and remediating those impacts, and contributing to nature recovery. However, consultants and their clients rarely have perfect information, which means estimates often need to be made; for example, about where products in a supply chain are sourced, how company activities translate into biodiversity impacts, the biodiversity present at different locations and what effect mitigation actions might have. These estimates can be viewed as the assumptions underlying assessments of impact and the strategies to mitigate them. To ensure credibility, consultants must ground these assumptions in scientific evidence, giving us confidence that mitigation plans will deliver as intended. Evidence should be used wherever critical assumptions are made (Salafsky et al., 2022).

Accurate impact assessments and well-designed, evidence-based strategies clearly benefit biodiversity (Pullin & Knight, 2001), but they can also benefit businesses. Firstly by reducing the risk of ineffective action (Figure 1), businesses can reduce the linked financial, reputational and societal risks, as well as risks to functioning ecosystems on which the business may depend. Secondly, drawing on evidence can lower the budget required to achieve a biodiversity objective by increasing the efficiency of conservation gains (Sutherland, 2022). From a consultancy perspective, grounding advice in the best available evidence strengthens professional integrity, reduces the associated risks if proposed environmental outcomes are not delivered and provides a robust, transparent justification for all conclusions and recommendations (Figure 1).

Whilst scientific research is often seen as the key resource to guide best practice, here we define 'evidence' more broadly as 'The relevant data, information, knowledge and wisdom used to assess

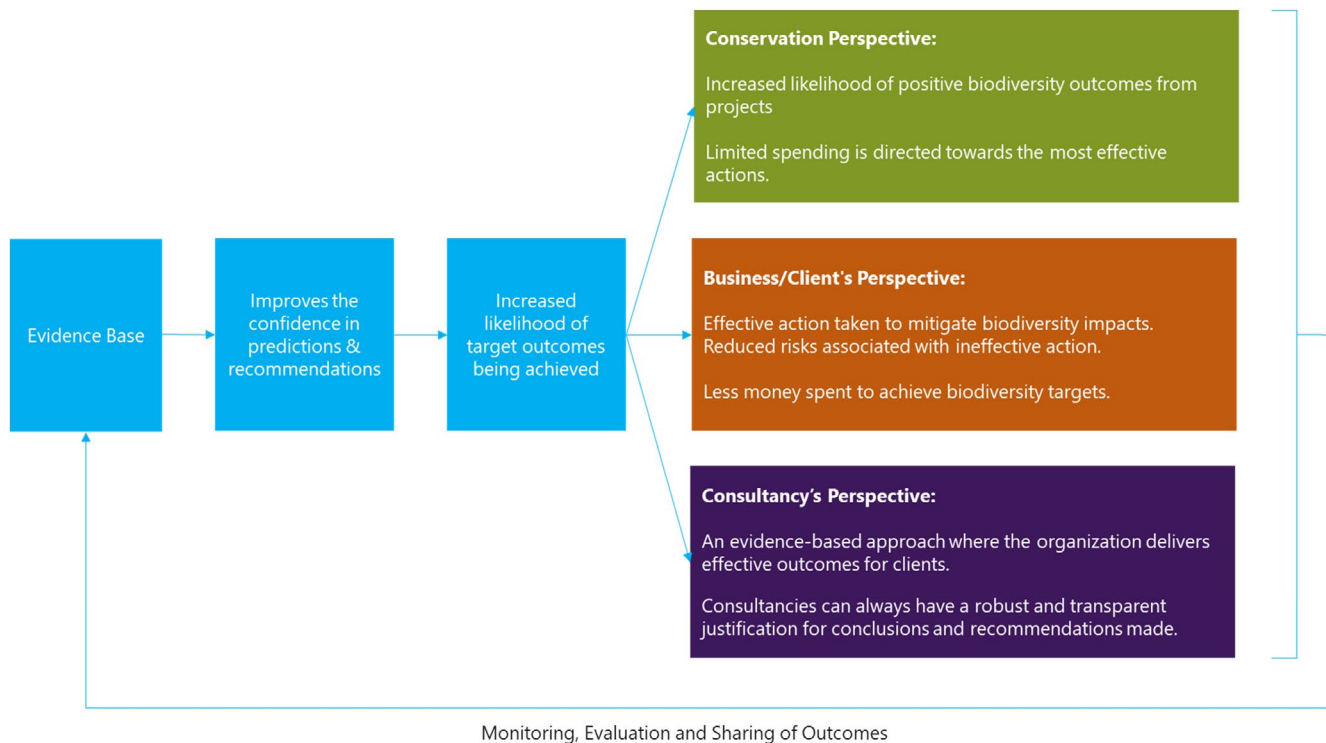


FIGURE 1 The multiple benefits of an evidence-based approach.

an assumption' (Salafsky et al., 2019, 2022). This definition acknowledges that evidence can come from a diverse array of sources and take a variety of different forms (Sutherland, 2022), including databases, scientific literature, expert knowledge (inc. local and indigenous knowledge), or case studies. It is a consultant's role to help navigate and make sense of this complexity, where evidence can differ in robustness, comprehensiveness or relevance to different business contexts.

There are many examples of businesses taking effective, evidence-based action for biodiversity. Evidence-based practice is seen as vital by industry bodies in the sector. For example, it is an important principle in the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management's Professional Code of Conduct, where 'evidence-based decision making' is a key component of sound professional judgement (CIEEM, 2025). Similarly, IEMA's Code of Professional Conduct requires 'high standards of professional practice' which includes consultants ensuring the 'use science-based targets and evidence whenever practical' (IEMA, 2018). As a more specific example, CIEEM has updated their competency frameworks to include more requirements for evidence use and evidence-based practice. Several other organisations are also taking positive steps. For example, The Wildlife Trusts have an Evidence Emergency project that is working to address the urgent need to enhance the way that the federation (46 Trusts) uses evidence in conservation, to improve data-driven decision-making. They are doing this through the establishment of an Evidence Center of Excellence and have developed an Evidence Competency Framework and Self-assessment Tool for staff. But too often these principles and examples are countered by cases of poor practice, inadequate outcomes or limited use of evidence (e.g. Hunter et al., 2021). To avoid these pitfalls, clear approaches are needed to ensure business actions and strategies are guided by robust evidence and are likely to deliver conservation objectives (White, Petrovan, et al., 2023). This is a requirement of becoming an Evidence Champion, a network of organisations committed to using evidence and promoting and sharing learnings on evidence-use run by Conservation Evidence [University of Cambridge].

2 | EMBEDDING PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

At The Biodiversity Consultancy, we have worked with the Conservation Evidence programme to develop an organisational evidence strategy. This strategy is designed to help us meet the principles for biodiversity strategies, as outlined by White, Petrovan, et al. (2023). It focuses on three key components: (1) determining where evidence is needed and the level of evidence required for different decisions, (2) approaches for reviewing and quantifying the reliability and robustness of the evidence base, and (3) documenting our approaches to ensure transparency and rigour in our advice. The strategy aims to provide a practical approach to evidence collation that improves the robustness of the recommendations we provide

to clients, contributes to strengthening the broader evidence base where possible and makes transparent the evidence underlying key assumptions in our work.

To put this strategy into practice, we have developed supporting guidance materials for our organisation, including an internal induction programme. In Table 1, we go through the key elements covered to ensure a shared understanding and consistent uptake across the organisation.

Whilst we have good examples of where the principles in this strategy have been met across our projects, we recognise that we do not always meet the principles outlined in our strategy in all our work. Below we highlight some of the challenges and lessons learned in the process.

3 | CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

3.1 | The need for clear messaging, whilst detailing the nuance of ecological systems

Business clients often want concise messaging, with clear recommendations of next steps and appropriate actions. However, ecological systems are inherently variable and the actions most appropriately tailored to address biodiversity loss are often context specific and uncertain. Consequently, there is often large uncertainty in the expected outcomes of different possible strategies and decisions, or large assumptions having to be made in analyses—even if the best available scientific evidence is used. This means that the outputs from consultancy work can be quite complex with nuanced results, where assumptions, limitations and uncertainties need to be clearly articulated if taking an evidence-based approach.

There is a risk that businesses may want a simple answer and prefer approaches that do not explain this detail and uncertainty. However, we believe transparency about uncertainty cannot be bypassed where it is significant. Ensuring confidence in and clarity about the recommendations provided is essential for maintaining professional integrity, reducing the risk of misinterpretation of results, and ensuring that conservation and business benefits are achieved. One approach to address this challenge when reporting back to clients is to include clear and concise summaries with key assumptions and evidence included and tailored to different audiences, but with the supporting detail and nuances included in the full report or appendices. Ensuring this nuance is maintained as the message is distributed internally to different audiences is also a challenge.

3.2 | Investing time and resources in consultancy settings

Whilst making evidence-based decisions can save money in the long run, assessing and compiling evidence upfront can be initially time-consuming and costly. This is a common reason stated for the lack

TABLE 1 Key elements covered in The Biodiversity Consultancy's Evidence Strategy.

Topic	Brief description
The need for an evidence-based approach	Describing why embedding evidence into our recommendations matters, including benefits for biodiversity (our mission) as well as business and consultancy outcomes.
Defining evidence, relevance and reliability	Building on White, Mukherjee, et al. (2023), we outline the types of evidence relevant to business-biodiversity action, and how to assess their reliability and relevance, using a broad definition of evidence consistent with our strategy.
Identifying where evidence is needed	Drawing on 'assumption-based thinking' (Sutherland, 2022), we highlight that evidence should ideally underpin all assumptions made in projects. This may be assumptions about the state of biodiversity, the impacts that business activities have on species and habitats, or the effectiveness and feasibility of actions. We describe the importance of identifying the most critical assumptions where evidence compilation should be prioritised.
Compiling and reviewing evidence	Guidance on compiling and reviewing evidence, with the level of assessment proportionate to the criticality of assumptions (adapted from Salafsky et al., 2022; Sutherland et al., 2021). This includes links to key resources, such as the Conservation Evidence database. We describe this in more detail below.
Making conclusions and recommendations	Processes for drawing conclusions from evidence (building on A. Christie et al., 2023), ranging from low-risk situations where recommendations are clear, to high-risk situations requiring detailed assessments
Documenting and communicating evidence	Guidance on referencing evidence in our work and communicating uncertainty to clients. This includes clear and transparent disclosure of the evidence base, and what to do when evidence is mixed or incomplete.
Communicating uncertainty	Approaches for clearly explaining uncertainty in recommendations and, where possible, what is needed to test sensitivity of results.
Monitoring, evaluation and learning	Principles for designing monitoring programmes in line with evidence-based principles, including opportunities to test or pilot actions where evidence is limited. This applies both to client recommendations and to monitoring our own effectiveness in using evidence.
Promoting disclosure and information sharing	Promoting the sharing of data collected, and evidence wherever possible.
Embedding evidence in review processes	Fostering a culture where evidence use is expected, including in internal review processes, and requesting specialist training where needed.

of evidence use in both conservation and business settings (Fabian et al., 2019; Walsh et al., 2019). Indeed, large amounts of effort are required to gain a complete and highly robust picture of biodiversity trends, pressures or the effects of actions. This can be an incredibly tricky challenge to overcome in consultancies—where time and money are often limited and budgets tight.

However, there are many levels of evidence assessment (see Table 2 for The Biodiversity Consultancy's levels in our strategy; modified from Sutherland et al., 2021), and some 'easy wins' that can be readily adopted. Existing reviews, meta-analyses and evidence-based guidance documents can be accessed within minutes or a few hours and provide an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the evidence base for a given question. Many databases are also available that summarise information on the status of biodiversity, threats and the effects of actions (Stephenson & Stengel, 2020). For example, databases such as Conservation Evidence, the Nature Based Solutions Initiative, Panorama and Evidensia collate and review the available evidence of the effectiveness of biodiversity interventions, which can help streamline this process. Thus, for many key assumptions or estimates, relatively minimal effort may be required to provide sufficient confidence in the question of interest.

In some situations, more intensive assessments of evidence may be required. This may be prohibitive for consultancies, but working collaboratively with other organisations, at a sectoral level, or partnering with academic institutions can help navigate this challenge.

Recently, the prominence and increasing capabilities of AI may open up opportunities here for improving efficiency of evidence collation (Reynolds et al., 2025). However, clear policies are needed on how and where AI can be used, how its use should be reported, and combined with expert assurance to avoid possible risks. For example, some AI tools can generate fake citations (or entire manuscripts), misinterpret data sources, propagate biases and errors, or not take into account the local nature of biodiversity conservation (Reynolds et al., 2025; Sandbrook, 2025).

3.3 | Deciding when enough evidence has been compiled (or not)

Because evidence collation can be time consuming, a recurring question that occurs within our organisation has been: 'How much evidence is enough?' Businesses constantly face this trade-off when assessing impacts and designing biodiversity strategies. When should limited resources go towards taking direct action versus investing in more evidence to strengthen confidence in that action? For example, when is it acceptable to use high-level biodiversity metrics to guide action, and when is detailed field data collection needed?

Building on Sutherland et al. (2021), we adopt a pragmatic approach in which the level of evidence review is prioritised based on (i) the potential gains in certainty from assessing evidence and (ii) the

TABLE 2 Guidance on levels of assessment and time taken for The Biodiversity Consultancy's projects.

Level of evidence assessment	Description	Effort required
0	No info needed. Assumptions made are not risky for the project	N/A
1/2	Ask internal staff members if evidence sources exist, or for recommendations for external sources/experts	Minutes/hours
1/2	Internet search for evidence reviews, and search for easy wins. This may be a recent systematic review of the topic, or online repositories such as Conservation Evidence	Minutes/hours
3	In addition to Level 2—where no easy wins are identified, conduct a rapid online search to identify key information sources and primary papers and then review that evidence	Hours/days
4	In additional to Level 3—reach out to external experts for advice / to identify key information sources	Hours/days
5 ^a	In addition to Level 4—apply for research time to conduct a time-sensitive rapid review of the topic	Days/weeks
6 ^a	In addition to Level 5—New data analysis, experiments and/or systematic review to provide/synthesise evidence for an assumption. This would be a substantial investment and often involve working with external researchers	Weeks/months/years

^aAt these levels, teams should make sure to document and share learnings from the evidence review to avoid future duplication of effort.

consequences of getting it wrong (Sutherland et al., 2021; Table 1; Figure 2). In practice, if there is insufficient support or confidence in an assumption, users move up the steps of evidence collation based on the criticality of the assumption and the time and resources available until greater clarity is achieved. Simple steps on how to proceed in each case are outlined in Figure 2.

This approach links to earlier work (Pilgrim et al., 2013), which sets out a framework for determining when and how biodiversity offsets may be appropriate, and the level of evidence required for a business to have confidence in offset success. Offsets are used to compensate for negative biodiversity impacts elsewhere (Maron et al., 2016), and approaches can vary in the significance of the biodiversity being impacted (i.e. what are the conservation and business risks if the offset doesn't work?), and the potential for offsets to deliver the gain (i.e. how certain are we that offsets will work?). An offset proposed in an area of high biodiversity significance, or with a strategy where we are highly uncertain about effects, would require a more detailed evidence base to allow us to proceed with confidence. An offset proposed for impacts on common species and habitats, using tested and proven techniques, would require a more limited collation of evidence.

Consider, for example, a new wind farm development with potential impacts on bats due to collisions with the wind turbine blades. The Environmental Impact Assessment identifies that the

project occurs within the mapped range of a Critically Endangered bat species about which little is known. However, surveys from similar projects in the area have suggested the bat species is not present. The project could assume the species is absent and decide against mitigation, such as increasing the minimum wind speed at which wind turbines start operating (an action that can reduce bat mortality¹). However, because the species is highly threatened, the risks of being wrong are substantial, from a conservation, reputational and financial risk perspective. For example, the project may be relying on investors who stipulate there must be minimal impacts to threatened species as a criterion for successful funding. Coupled with large uncertainty about the species' ecology, range and baseline surveys, this scenario demands a high level of evidence. The business would need to invest in detailed surveys, evidence reviews, and expert input before being able to assess if mitigation is required or not.

The second example considers a confectionery company sourcing cocoa from several different geographic regions, wanting to invest in landscape restoration for biodiversity in the region they are sourcing from. They decide to use the STAR restoration metric—a widely applied global metric of biodiversity significance that can help prioritise restoration actions (Mair et al., 2021; Turner

¹<https://www.conservationevidence.com/actions/1960>.

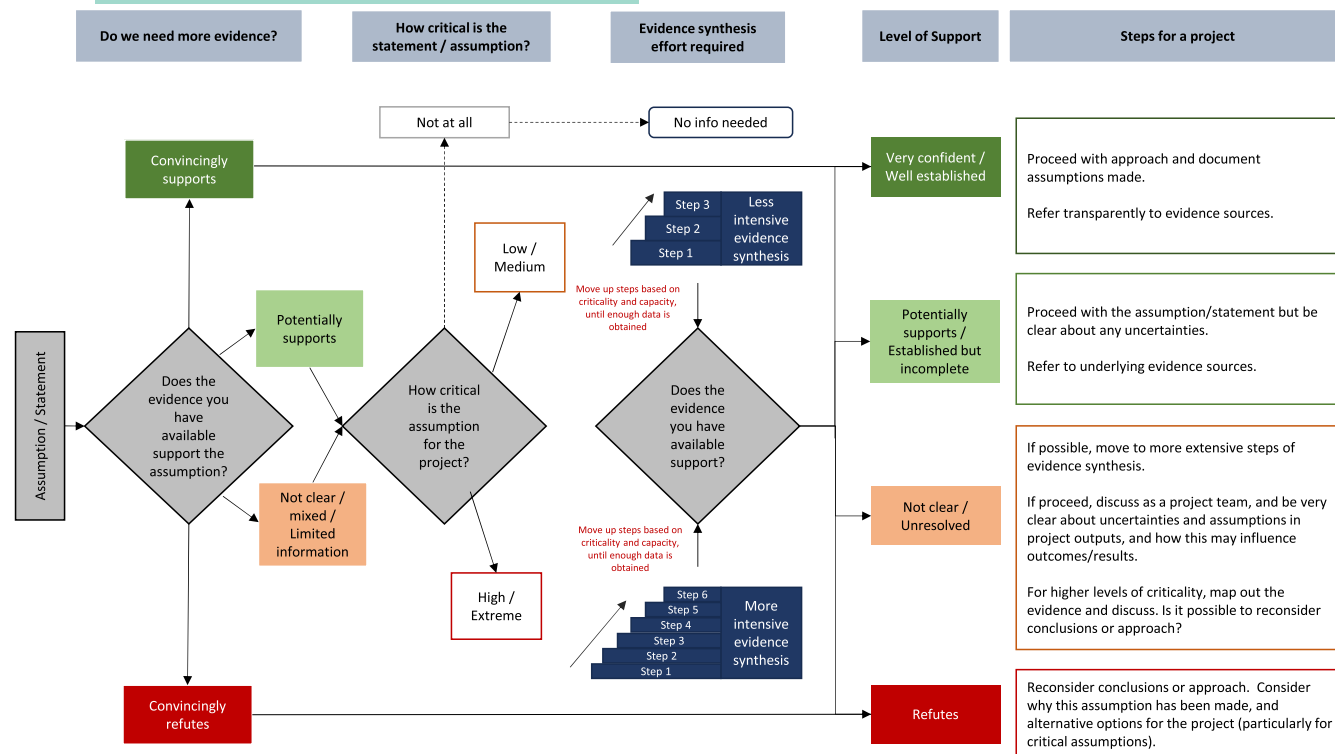


FIGURE 2 Decision tree for assessing level of confidence in an assumption, and evidence synthesis requirements in The Biodiversity Consultancy's projects (adapted from Salafsky et al., 2022).

et al., 2024). At a broad decision-making level, the company could use STAR to provide evidence supporting the assumption that investing in landscape restoration in one geographic region may be more impactful than investing in another. This can help the company prioritise landscapes for biodiversity investment and improve supply chain transparency. However, if the company wanted to make claims about outcomes for specific threatened species at individual sites, the STAR metric is unlikely to be suitable for the criticality of this claim, given the risks of making inaccurate claims about threatened species outcomes. As a global metric built on low granularity datasets of species ranges from IUCN Red List Assessments, the metric can be uncertain when applied to small spatial scales. For this use case, the STAR metric can be an important source of evidence but is unlikely to be sufficient to provide enough confidence in claims around threatened species outcomes at specific sites. Where high uncertainties exist in assessments, it is important to be transparent about the limited evidence base underlying an assumption, prioritise additional data collection to increase confidence in that assessment, and be clear about remaining uncertainties in recommendations or statements.

3.4 | Filling data gaps and uncertainties

Whilst the evidence base that could be used to inform business action on biodiversity is expanding, significant gaps and uncertainties remain (e.g. Christie et al., 2021), with research often not

targeted to priority areas (Buxton et al., 2021). Consultancies must be transparent when evidence is limited and be clear about when recommendations are based on a limited or mixed evidence base, or expertise and professional judgement rather than scientific data.

Consultancies can (and should) also play an active role, either directly or through their clients, to help generate, build and maintain the evidence base. Key gaps relevant to many businesses can often be quickly identified by consultants familiar with the sectors, and so they are well placed to find opportunities for businesses or sectoral groups to fund research to fill these gaps, which could help improve practice more widely.

Consultancies can also promote best practice by encouraging clients to share data relevant to biodiversity wherever possible. For example, sharing monitoring or baseline data to platforms like the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) can help build the evidence base (GBIF Secretariat & IAIA, 2020). Indeed, many projects, such as those funded by Equator Principle banks, may be required to share data to such platforms. GBIF provides standardised templates for uploading such data, which, if consultancies provide businesses data in this format, can reduce the barriers to data sharing. Environmental data collected is often seen as sensitive and confidential, making data sharing challenging, but anonymisation of data is often possible. Consultancies can promote data sharing by highlighting the opportunities associated with transparency (e.g. reducing duplication of surveys, promoting the effectiveness of sectoral practice, business reputational

benefits from taking proactive action to build the evidence base). Businesses can also share data amongst communities of practice with other companies (e.g. through industry organisations), or publishing results of tests of actions in journals (e.g. Conservation Evidence journal, ESE Practice Insight articles).

3.5 | Embedding evidence into processes within an organisation is vital

Having a strategy and examples of where it has worked well is one thing, but embedding evidence into all work takes effort to change culture and processes. As recommended by Sutherland (2022), we are now working to better formalise evidence-based processes across our organisation. One key route to formalising evidence-based processes is through an internal training programme to highlight the importance of evidence-based work, set expectations for our consultant staff, and ensure they have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding. We have developed an induction programme in science-based consultancy and evidence use. This currently takes the form of a training session going through topics covered by our strategy—including our definition of evidence, how to prioritise and collate evidence, how to document evidence in our projects and expectations for our staff. This is delivered alongside best practice examples of projects from across our teams and services. We have also developed internal pages for our intranet detailing a summary of this information.

Another is to ensure that key review processes of work across the organisation include links to evidence-based approaches. For example, when technical review or quality control procedures are followed, they can include questions or prompts around appropriate collation, use, and documentation of evidence. We are working to embed this approach into our review processes, and have developed initial checklists for project managers and reviewers to cover the main points in an evidence-based approach. We recommend similar checklists could be used by other organisations, based on Sutherland (2022) Section 12.2 Checklists for evidence use by organisations.

Embedding evidence use across organisational processes can be challenging. Networks like the Evidence Champions programme can be a useful way of sharing challenges, learnings, and good practice between organisations.

4 | RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMBEDDING EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES IN CONSULTANCIES

With increasing expectations for businesses to mitigate biodiversity impacts and contribute to global 'Nature Positive' goals of nature recovery (Booth et al., 2024; Panwar, 2023), it is vital that consultants ensure their engagement leads to beneficial conservation outcomes. Whilst there are many inspiring examples

of business action, too often efforts are ineffective or poorly grounded in evidence.

One important step is for consultancies to develop an organisational strategy for evidence use. The details of these strategies and how they are further embedded into corporate culture and ambitions for evidence use will obviously vary by organisation, but strategies could draw on the approaches outlined here as well as resources such as the Conservation Evidence checklists for evidence-based practice (Amano et al., 2022). Closely linked to this is the need to embed evidence-based practice as a core skill within organisations. This can be done by making evidence use and experience in science-based consultancy work explicit requirements in job descriptions, interviews and staff development.

Normalising evidence use in day-to-day business practice is also key. This could be achieved through inductions, training, and performance reviews. Regular audits, for example annual reviews of the extent and effectiveness of evidence use, can further help to maintain and improve standards and track progress. Beyond individual firms, collaboration across the sector will play an important role. Sharing innovation and application of best practice at conferences, contributing to the wider evidence base through publishing in various forums (e.g. peer-reviewed literature, report series) and engaging with communities of practice to help shape leading practice can help reduce risks and maximise benefits of evidence in supporting decisions on biodiversity. For example, journals like the Conservation Evidence Journal offer simple ways of publishing results and sharing with the wider community.

Consultancies can also add value by testing actions within projects, using robust study designs to assess interventions, and by investing in research where possible to address key data gaps and uncertainties. Encouraging clients to share data and lessons learned is another important contribution. As an example, a recent collaborative project between businesses in the dairy sector, authors from academia, consultancies and businesses, helped assess and share the whole life cycle impacts of dairy farming in the Netherlands and generate best practice guidance (Bull et al., 2025). Providing some examples from The Biodiversity Consultancy, our staff members have published in the scientific literature a review of carcass persistence trials that is an important step in estimating bird mortality at wind farms (Wilson et al., 2022) and collaborative guidance with industry and NGOs on mitigation of impacts from renewable energy developments (Bennun et al., 2021; Fletcher et al., 2025).

Partnerships with academic institutions can also help, providing technical rigour in the design of tests of interventions, prioritising research to answer decision-relevant questions and ensuring that results are widely disseminated.

We hope that sharing our strategy, experiences and approaches to overcoming challenges will provide some guidance and inspiration to other organisations seeking to strengthen their approach to using evidence. Consultancies are uniquely positioned to serve as evidence or knowledge brokers for the private sector, ensuring action by businesses is grounded in the best available knowledge and so more likely to deliver effective conservation (meeting several of the

desirable features outlined by Kadykalo et al., 2021). Whilst applying evidence-based practice in consultancy can be challenging, it is vital for achieving positive biodiversity outcomes.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Biodiversity Consultancy's Approach to Evidence Use: Thomas B. White, Graham W. Prescott, Benjamin Jobson, Malcolm Starkey, and Laura J. Sonter. Conceptualisation of article: All authors. First draft: Thomas B. White, Graham W. Prescott, Benjamin Jobson. Reviews and finalisation: All authors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to colleagues at The Biodiversity Consultancy for conversations, inputs and sharing excellent examples of previous work that helped shape the evidence-based approach. Particular thanks to Adeline Serckx and Leon Bennun for input into the approach.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors affiliated with The Biodiversity Consultancy receive income from commercial services related to environmental management in the private sector. The Biodiversity Consultancy are members of the Evidence Champion's programme run by Conservation Evidence.

PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://www.webofscience.com/api/gateway/wos/peer-review/10.1002/2688-8319.70176>.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The manuscript does not contain any primary data.

ORCID

Thomas B. White  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0536-6162>

REFERENCES

- Amano, T., Bako, L., Best, M., Boenisch, N., Boersch-Supan, P., Browne, D., Buckley, Y., Burgman, M., Cadotte, M. W., Canessa, S., Cheng, S. H., Christie, A. P., Citegetse, G., Cook, C. N., Cooke, S. J., Cranston, G., Dicks, L. V., De La Luz, A., Dickson, I., & Young, L. C. (2022). 12. Transforming practice: Checklists for delivering change. In W. J. Sutherland (Ed.), *Transforming conservation* (1st ed., pp. 367–386). Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0321.12>
- Bennun, L., van Bochove, J., Ng, C., Fletcher, C., Wilson, D., Phair, N., & Carbone, G. (2021). *Mitigating biodiversity impacts associated with solar and wind energy development*. IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature and The Biodiversity Consultancy. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49283>
- Booth, H., Milner-Gulland, E. J., McCormick, N., & Starkey, M. (2024). Operationalizing transformative change for business in the context of Nature Positive. *One Earth*, 7(7), 1235–1249. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2024.06.003>
- Bull, J. W., Taylor, I., De Valença, A., IJspeert, R., Van Erve, B., Modernel, P., & Poore, J. A. C. (2025). Towards positive net outcomes for biodiversity, and developing safeguards to accompany headline biodiversity indicators. *npj Biodiversity*, 4(1), 31. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44185-025-00095-5>
- Buxton, R. T., Nyboer, E. A., Pigeon, K. E., Raby, G. D., Rytwinski, T., Gallagher, A. J., Schuster, R., Lin, H., Fahrig, L., Bennett, J. R., Cooke, S. J., & Roche, D. G. (2021). Avoiding wasted research resources in conservation science. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 3(2), e329. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.329>
- Christie, A., Morgan, W., Salafsky, N., White, T., Irvine, R., Boenisch, N., Chiaravalloti, R., Kincaid, K., Rezaie, A. M., Yamashita, H., & Sutherland, W. (2023). Assessing diverse evidence to improve conservation decision making. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 5, e13024.
- Christie, A. P., Amano, T., Martin, P. A., Petrovan, S. O., Shackelford, G. E., Simmons, B. I., Smith, R. K., Williams, D. R., Wordley, C. F. R., & Sutherland, W. J. (2021). The challenge of biased evidence in conservation. *Conservation Biology*, 35(1), 249–262. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13577>
- CIEEM. (2025). *Code of professional conduct*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Code-of-Professional-Conduct-April-2025.pdf>
- European Commission. (2024). *Corporate sustainability reporting*. European Commission. https://finance.ec.europa.eu/capital-markets-union-and-financial-markets/company-reporting-and-auditing/company-reporting/corporate-sustainability-reporting_en
- Fabian, Y., Bollmann, K., Brang, P., Heiri, C., Olschewski, R., Rigling, A., Stofer, S., & Holderegger, R. (2019). How to close the science-practice gap in nature conservation? Information sources used by practitioners. *Biological Conservation*, 235, 93–101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2019.04.011>
- Fletcher, C., Bennun, L., Jobson, B., Sonter, L., Murrell, L., Williams, H., Asante-Owusu, R., & Liu, Q. (2025). Biodiversity and responsible sourcing for wind and solar developments: An overview and action agenda.
- GBIF Secretariat & IAIA. (2020). *Best practices for publishing biodiversity data from environmental impact assessments*. GBIF Secretariat. <https://doi.org/10.35035/doc-5xdm-8762>
- Hunter, S. B., zu Ermgassen, S. O. E., Downey, H., Griffiths, R. A., & Howe, C. (2021). Evidence shortfalls in the recommendations and guidance underpinning ecological mitigation for infrastructure developments. *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*, 2(3), e12089.
- IEMA. (2018). *Code of Professional Conduct Guidance on Interpretation*. <https://www.iema.net/media/35bnbjg/iema-code-of-practice.pdf>
- Kadykalo, A. N., Buxton, R. T., Morrison, P., Anderson, C. M., Bickerton, H., Francis, C. M., Smith, A. C., & Fahrig, L. (2021). Bridging research and practice in conservation. *Conservation Biology*, 35(6), 1725–1737. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13732>
- Mair, L., Bennun, L. A., Brooks, T. M., Butchart, S. H., Bolam, F. C., Burgess, N. D., Ekstrom, J. M., Milner-Gulland, E. J., Hoffmann, M., Ma, K., Macfarlane, N. B., Raimondo, D. C., Rodrigues, A. S. L., Shen, X., Strassburg, B. B. N., Beatty, C. R., Gómez-Creutzberg, C., Iribarrem, A., Irmadhiany, M., ... McGowan, P. J. (2021). A metric for spatially explicit contributions to science-based species targets. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 5(6), 836–844.
- Maron, M., Ives, C. D., Kujala, H., Bull, J. W., Maseyk, F. J., Bekessy, S., Gordon, A., Watson, J. E., Lentini, P. E., Gibbons, P., Possingham, H. P., Hobbs, R. J., Keith, D. A., Wintle, B. A., & Evans, M. C. (2016). Taming a wicked problem: Resolving controversies in biodiversity offsetting. *Bioscience*, 66, biw038.
- Panwar, R. (2023). Business and biodiversity: Achieving the 2050 vision for biodiversity conservation through transformative business practices. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 32(11), 3607–3613. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-023-02575-1>
- Pilgrim, J. D., Brownlie, S., Ekstrom, J. M., Gardner, T. A., Hase, A., ten Kate, K., Savy, C. E., Theo Stephens, R. T., Temple, H. J., Treweek, J., & Ussher, G. T. (2013). Offsetability is highest for common and widespread biodiversity: Response to Regnery et al. *Conservation Letters*, 6(5), 387–388.

- Pullin, A. S., & Knight, T. M. (2001). Effectiveness in conservation practice: Pointers from medicine and public health. *Conservation Biology*, 15(1), 50–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2001.99499.x>
- Reynolds, S. A., Christie, A. P., Dicks, L. V., Jaffer, S., Madhavapeddy, A., Smith, R. K., & Sutherland, W. J. (2025). Will AI speed up literature reviews or derail them entirely? *Nature*, 643(8071), 329–331. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-02069-w>
- Salafsky, N., Boshoven, J., Burivalova, Z., Dubois, N. S., Gomez, A., Johnson, A., Lee, A., Margoluis, R., Morrison, J., Muir, M., Pratt, S. C., Pullin, A. S., Salzer, D., Stewart, A., Sutherland, W. J., & Wordley, C. F. R. (2019). Defining and using evidence in conservation practice. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 1(5), e27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.27>
- Salafsky, N., Irvine, R., Boshoven, J., Lucas, J., Prior, K., Bisailon, J., Graham, B., Harper, P., Laurin, A. Y., Lavers, A., Neufeld, L., & Margoluis, R. (2022). A practical approach to assessing existing evidence for specific conservation strategies. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 4(4), e12654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.12654>
- Sandbrook, C. (2025). Beyond the hype: Navigating the conservation implications of artificial intelligence. *Conservation Letters*, 18(1), e13076. <https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.13076>
- Stephenson, P. J., & Stengel, C. (2020). An inventory of biodiversity data sources for conservation monitoring. *PLoS One*, 15(12), e0242923. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0242923>
- Sutherland, W. J. (2022). *Transforming conservation: A practical guide to evidence and decision making* (1st ed.). Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0321>
- Sutherland, W. J., Downey, H., Frick, W. F., Tinsley-Marshall, P., & McPherson, T. (2021). Planning practical evidence-based decision making in conservation within time constraints: The strategic evidence assessment framework. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 60, 125975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2021.125975>
- TNFD. (2023). Guidance on the identification and assessment of nature related issues: The LEAP approach Version 1.1. https://tnfd.global/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Guidance_on_the_identification_and_assessment_of_nature-related_Issues_The_TNFD_LEAP_approach_V1.1_October2023.pdf?v=1698403116
- Turner, J. A., Starkey, M., Dulvy, N. K., Hawkins, F., Mair, L., Serckx, A., Brooks, T., Polidoro, B., Butchart, S. H. M., Carpenter, K., Epps, M., Jabado, R. W., Macfarlane, N. B. W., & Bennun, L. (2024). Targeting ocean conservation outcomes through threat reduction. *npj Ocean Sustainability*, 3(1), 4. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44183-023-00040-8>
- United Nations Environment Programme. (2021). *State of finance for nature*. United Nations Environment Programme.
- Walsh, J. C., Dicks, L. V., Raymond, C. M., & Sutherland, W. J. (2019). A typology of barriers and enablers of scientific evidence use in conservation practice. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 250, 109481. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2019.109481>
- White, T. B., Mukherjee, N., Petrovan, S. O., & Sutherland, W. J. (2023). Identifying opportunities to deliver effective and efficient outcomes from business-biodiversity action. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 140, 221–231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2022.12.003>
- White, T. B., Petrovan, S. O., Bennun, L. A., Butterworth, T., Christie, A. P., Downey, H., Hunter, S. B., Jobson, B. R., zu Ermgassen, S. O. S. E., & Sutherland, W. J. (2023). Principles for using evidence to improve biodiversity impact mitigation by business. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 32, 4719–4733. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3389>
- Wilson, D., Hulka, S., & Bennun, L. (2022). A review of raptor carcass persistence trials and the practical implications for fatality estimation at wind farms. *PeerJ*, 10, e14163. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.14163>

How to cite this article: White, T. B., Prescott, G. W., Jobson, B., Morgan, W., Smith, R. K., Starkey, M., & Sonter, L. J. (2026). Evidence-based practice in consultancy settings is a win-win for business and nature. *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*, 7, e70176. <https://doi.org/10.1002/2688-8319.70176>