



North American Congress for Conservation Biology

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN
CONSERVATION FROM SUMMIT TO SEA

June 23–28

2024

Vancouver BC, Canada

MEASURING CONSERVATION IMPACT: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU ASK 'WHAT IF'?

DETAILS	Thu, June 27, 11:00-12:30 Michael Kingsmill Forum NACCB 2024 University of British Columbia
PRESENTERS	Dr Vanessa Adams, Dr Tori Graham, Prof Adina Merenlender, Dr Ayesha Tulloch
CONVENORS	Dr Vanessa Adams + Dr Tori Graham

SUMMARY

The session was attended by approximately 40 participants. We framed the session with a short introduction around how the field of Conservation Biology is growing from a crisis discipline towards a field that calls for rigorous evaluation of conservation programs. This requirement for conservation programs to demonstrate 'what difference did the intervention make' presents a tension between acting urgently while also designing a program that can be rigorously evaluated, and spending the time and resources to measure impact.

We had four presenters deliver PechaKucha style presentations with 20 slides automatically set to appear for 20 seconds. Our series of presentations were designed to collectively share diverse stories of how, when and why impact evaluation was used in conservation programs and lessons learnt from applying what if thinking.

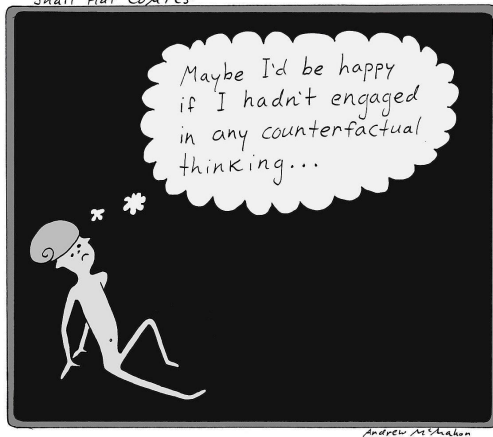
As a group together with the audience, we discussed topics such as how to apply 'what if' thinking when the program was not designed for rigorous impact evaluation or when the data is not available, how to apply counterfactual thinking for richer learning about what aspects of a program worked well and why, what to do when you cannot randomly assign your conservation treatment, and how to better account for social impacts and ethical considerations. Questions from the audience included how to handle the not so glossy success stories – when the program you are



evaluating has some poor outcomes, does this limit our ability to publish the research? We introduced the audience to the SCB Team Counterfactual community and virtual IDO IMPACT seminar series. Expected outcomes are to equip conservation researchers and practitioners with more confidence in applying counterfactual thinking.



Snail Hat Comics



Andrew Aschmann

