



A reserve for the critically-endangered Blue-throated Macaw in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia is one of the many conservation projects worldwide reporting it has been negatively impacted by Coronavirus pandemic.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Conservation Activities Worldwide



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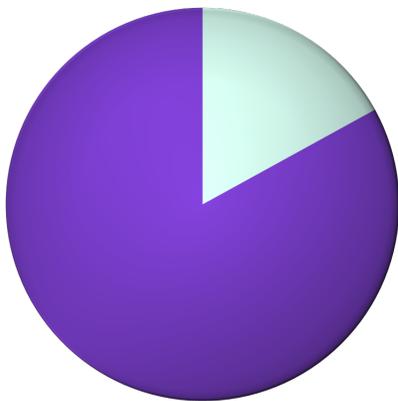
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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns have severely disrupted critical species conservation activities and fieldwork worldwide according to a survey of more than 300 conservationists in 85 countries conducted by [The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund](#) (MBZ Fund) in April and May 2020.

Furthermore, the pandemic has had consequences for many of these conservationists' jobs as well as the financial health of the organizations for which they work due to the loss of revenue for their organizations due to park, zoo, and aquarium closures, the decline in eco-tourism, and the reduction in student enrollment for courses and fieldwork experiences.

While some conservationists were still working productively in their laboratories and offices, analyzing data for academic journals and actively fundraising for future projects, many said they were very concerned about increased threats to the species and habitats to which they had dedicated their lives. They cited concerns about increased poaching due to reduced presence of law enforcement and tourists and greater reliance on hunting and deforestation for agriculture as a result of loss of jobs and income. Others were concerned about their inability to stop predatory invasive species from decimating the nests of endangered birds, while others were worried about their field equipment or, to an even greater degree, about the local residents they had left behind. The results of this survey point to the necessity of continuing funding, without disruption and with greater intensity, for the conservationists who serve as first responders, medics, security detail, and overall protectors of our endangered species and their habitats worldwide.



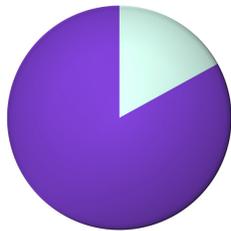
83%
OF CONSERVATIONISTS
say the Covid-19 pandemic has
affected their ability to do work

Survey Highlights

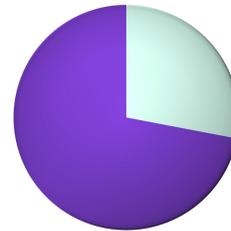
This survey provides unprecedented insight into the impact of the pandemic and its associated social controls on species conservation activities and conservation organizations globally. More than 300 active conservationists with projects for all types of species located across more than 85 different countries responded in April and May 2020.

Most respondents, who were intending to be actively engaged in conservation fieldwork, were unable to do so, which resulted in delays, cancellations and unfinished fieldwork.

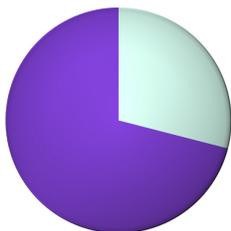
Business models for conservation organizations have been severely threatened, particularly those that rely on eco-tourism, student fees or tuition, and visitor spending at zoos, botanical gardens, protected areas and/or wildlife parks.



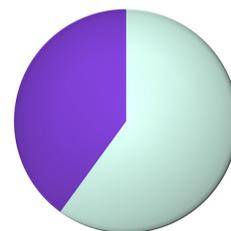
83% of respondents said the pandemic had affected their ability to do fieldwork.



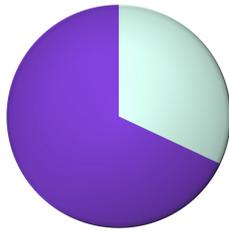
More than 70% of planned conservation activities were cancelled or postponed.



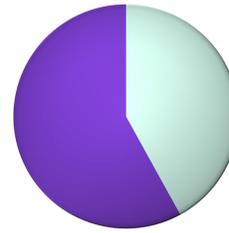
More than two-thirds responded that they cancelled fieldwork planned within the next six months.



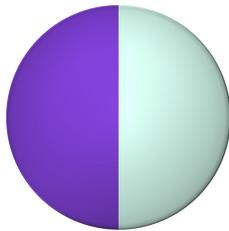
40% of conservationists report that the pandemic negatively affected their job or career.



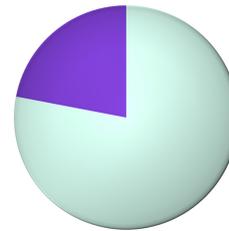
66% conservationists reported that the pandemic impacted their organization



58% of conservationists report that their organizations are experiencing financial difficulties



50% reported that donations to their organizations have decreased.



22% of conservation organizations plan to eliminate jobs.

There is little evidence that lockdowns have improved the conservation status of species and habitats. Very few of the respondents indicate any positive effects on species, save for maybe fungus.

Globally, species and their habitats are not better off due to the pandemic. In fact, many species and their habitats are severely threatened by the effects of the pandemic due to habitat destruction, poaching, hunting and a reduction in enforcement of environmental rules and regulations.

Due to restrictions on fieldwork, many conservationists are unable to continue control measures for invasive species such as rats and cats, resulting in additional pressure on already endangered species.

Some species are unaffected by the pandemic because they suffer from unrelated threats, such as climate change or because the species is so remotely located that it is unaffected by human activity.

Recommendations

There are several broad conclusions that can be drawn from the survey results:

- The conservation sector must ensure that governments are not soothed into inaction by feel-good reports of wildlife's return to urban settings. Just like other industries and sectors that are lobbying for financial rescues in order to survive and recover from the pandemic, it is critical to make the case that conservation efforts be funded not only at the level that they were at before the pandemic, but at an even higher amount that reflects the severity of the unprecedented threats to biodiversity.
- In the face of a global recession, many countries are looking at significant stimulus packages to restart their economies and to help entire economic sectors rebound as fast as possible. The international community must make it a priority to provide financial aid and assistance to the developing world and economies in transition to ensure that decades of achievements in nature conservation and sustainable development are not wasted in our desire to put the pandemic and its consequences behind us.
- The results further underline the importance of developing the capacity of local conservationists and organizations. Although they may also face local or national travel restrictions, these are likely to be of shorter duration, and reliance on international travel by non-local conservationists can no longer be taken for granted.
- The importance of engaging with local communities in conservation messaging and action is highlighted by some of the comments, such as accounts of angry farmers retaliating against wildlife and increased bushmeat hunting. This is important at the best of times, but when law enforcement and economic opportunities are lacking, generating local support for conservation is even more crucial. There is a clear need for a conservation presence in the field, in situ, and for sustained conservation efforts.
- The data presented here further reinforces the necessity of diversifying conservation funding sources. The obvious example of reduced ecotourism is but one indicator that in a world where international travel may well be curtailed, this strategy for conserving some of the world's most endangered species may have to change. Furthermore, as support from global donors is reduced, financing of conservation efforts may have to become more locally intrinsic. For example, governments could more strongly support the role of conservationists in engaging with local communities to reduce economically and socially harmful destruction of nature and biodiversity. This would not necessarily be simply financial, but a societal undertaking.

- In the meantime, there will be a continued reliance on international donors for species conservation efforts, and those donors should talk to each other more in order to minimize funding gaps.
- A similar survey needs to be conducted in the near future to gauge whether the situation has improved, worsened or remained the same.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund would like to express its thanks and appreciation to all those grant recipients who took the time to complete the survey. It is hoped that the data and insights collated here will help further consolidate species conservation globally.

About the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, based in Abu Dhabi, is a philanthropic endowment established in 2009 to provide small grants (\$25,000 or less) to individual species conservation initiatives worldwide. To date the Fund has provided over \$20m in financial support to more than 2,100 species conservation projects across more than 160 countries, supporting more than 1,350 different species and subspecies. The MBZ Fund's reach is global, providing grants devoted to all species types, including amphibians, birds, fish, fungi, invertebrates, mammals, plants and reptiles.

The small grants from the MBZ Fund are specifically intended to support boots-on-the-ground, direct species conservation projects, which usually require significant time and effort from conservationists who are in the field working directly to support and improve the status of endangered species in their natural habitat. The MBZ Fund is grounded on the philosophy that species of all types are the building blocks of life and that species conservationists are the first line of defense against their extinction.



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The Survey

In April and May 2020, while many countries across the world were locked down to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MBZ Fund distributed an online survey to ask its most recent grant recipients questions about the impact of the COVID-19 situation on their conservation activities. The survey was distributed to those who had recently received a grant from the MBZ Fund, because they were most likely to be conducting fieldwork at the time of the pandemic. The survey was intended to capture information about the effect of the pandemic on their conservation activities, organizations, and target species, as well as the habitats in which the grant recipients were working. The survey included both closed and open-ended questions, responses to which were collected via an online survey tool and required about 10 minutes to complete.

The Sample

In total, the MBZ Fund requested responses from 409 conservationists located in more than 90 different countries who had received a grant from the MBZ Fund between 2017 and 2020. Three-hundred twenty-three conservationists completed the survey -- an exceptionally high response rate of nearly 80%. This high response rate from a very broad geographic distribution of active species conservationists working with different types of species and habitats provided unprecedented insight into the impact of the pandemic and its associated social controls on species conservation activities and conservation organizations globally.

Respondents represented ■ NGOs (33%), ■ universities (33%), ■ government agencies (10%), ■ independent conservationists (20%), ■ or other organizations.

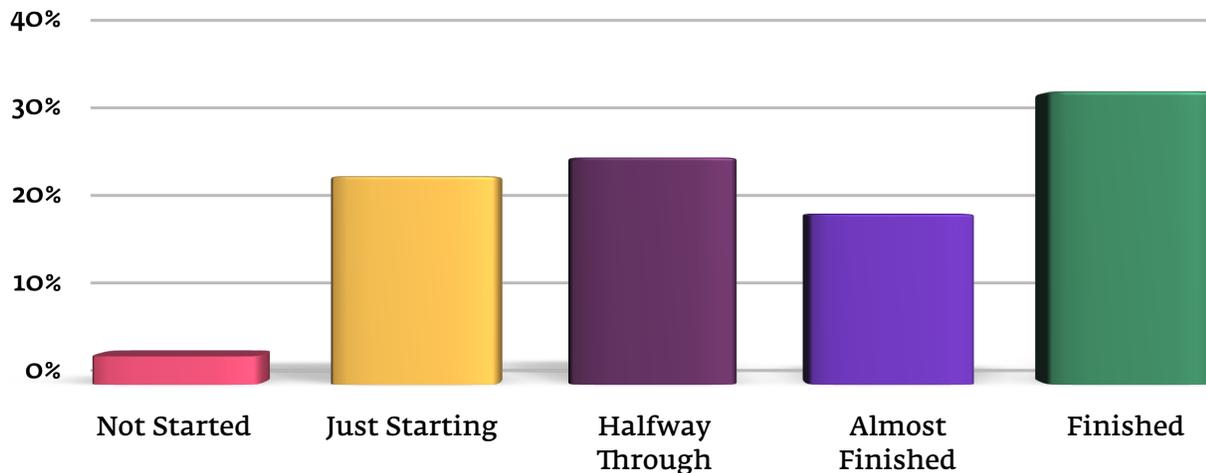


The species for which the respondents received grants matched the grant profile of the MBZ Fund as a whole, with about 30% receiving grants for mammal projects, followed by an approximately even distribution of respondents receiving grants for amphibian projects (14%), birds (12%), invertebrates (12%) and plants (13%) and the rest receiving grants for fungus, fish or reptile projects.

Survey respondents reported the operational status of their MBZ Fund-related projects across a continuum from “not yet started” to “finished.” Most (70%) said they were still working on their projects, whereas 30% said their projects were completed.

Figure One: Distribution of reported project progress

Q3. To what extent have you. Completed the planned activities for this conservation grant?

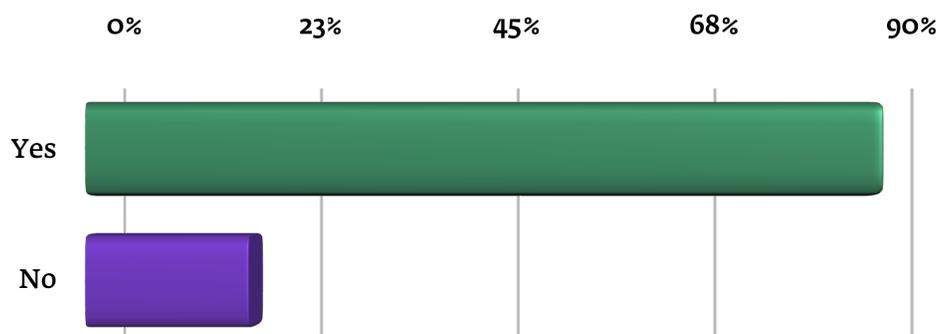


Impact of COVID-19 on Conservation Activities

Of the more than 300 respondents to our survey, Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that the pandemic had affected their ability to do fieldwork, and more than 66% responded that they had had to cancel fieldwork that they had planned to do in the next six months. Sixty percent affirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected their ability to make progress on their MBZ Fund grant project. When asked about their other, non-MBZ Fund related conservation activities, almost 75% reported that their conservation activities had been disrupted by the pandemic. For those respondents who indicated that the pandemic did not affect their conservation work, 29% had already completed their projects, while others (11%) were working as normal in countries that had not implemented any pandemic control mechanisms.

Figure Two: Proportion of respondents who could not conduct fieldwork

Q14. Has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your ability to conduct fieldwork?



When we asked respondents to explain why their work had been disrupted, almost 200 offered additional details about how the pandemic had affected their conservation activities. The reasons for the disruption to their conservation work varied from travel restrictions, closures and/or curfews, to the inability to work in groups or address large audiences due to social distancing precautions.

For some the pandemic had put their planned activities on hold for at least a year.

For example:

“ One portion [of the project] was about field research that had to be foregone because of lockdowns, and as my species is a migratory bird, I am almost certain that they would have migrated back to their breeding grounds by the time the lockdown ends. ”

“ Impossible to travel to arrange set-up meetings; and as there is only a relatively brief annual time window for fieldwork (during Russian summer), all activities will now almost certainly be delayed until 2021. ”

“ The release of turtles is seasonal and entirely dependent on water level for its success. The ideal time for release is towards the end of the wet season (March-April) when the water is at its highest level. For this reason, we now need to delay this activity to the same period next year when releases have higher success rates and turtles are more likely to thrive. This will mean that subsequent post-release monitoring must also be delayed. ”

For others, the pandemic presented heartbreaking logistical difficulties:

“ After one year in the planning, I was due to fly to Malaysia in mid-March to conduct one year of fieldwork research funded by my MBZ grant. However, the day before I was due to fly, Malaysia implemented a lockdown and I was not able to enter the country. The research will have to be postponed until I am able to travel to Malaysia. Additionally, I only have 1.5 years of funding left for my PhD, so this delay means that I may have to work on my PhD unpaid for a year or more... ”

“ Fieldwork has been affected because of the lock-down and travel restrictions from February. Our field assistant also hasn't been able to go to field because of travel restrictions, and his own kidney issues for which he hasn't been able to receive medical treatment either. ”

Others were concerned about the fate of equipment that remained inaccessible in the field:

“ We still have camera traps in the field, and I am afraid the information could be damaged, and the equipment as well, due to the need of change battery. ”

Conservationists were productive while being home-bound

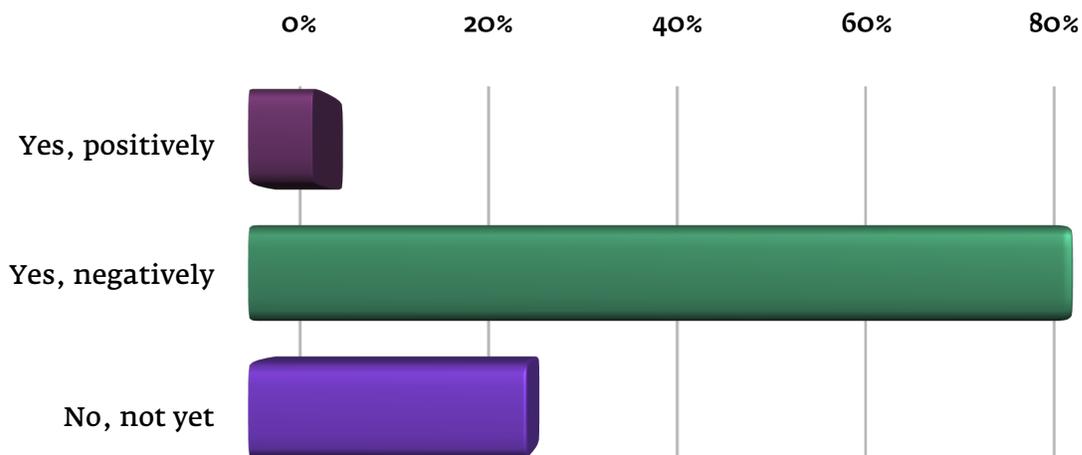
On the other hand, not all was lost for the MBZ Fund conservationists. Many reported using the time away from the field productively to conduct other, non-fieldwork related activities, such as analyzing data (20%), publishing research in academic journals (22%), submitting formal reports (31%), applying for additional grants (40%) and raising additional funds (50%) for their organization.

Impact of COVID-19 on Conservation Careers and Organizations

It is clear from our survey that conservationists and conservation organizations such as NGOs and universities have been financially affected by the pandemic, some severely. 40% of respondents indicated that the pandemic had negatively impacted their jobs or careers, and 22% reported that their organization planned to eliminate jobs due to the pandemic. Furthermore, 68% indicated that the pandemic negatively affected their organization, and more than 57% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “My organization is experiencing financial difficulties.” 50% reported that donations to their organizations had decreased.

Figure Three: Proportion of Organizations Affected by Covid-19

Q18. Has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your organization?



Of the more than 300 respondents to our survey, almost half (46%) took the time to tell us how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their organization. Many highlighted the loss of revenue due to park closures, decline in eco-tourism or lower student enrollment in courses or fieldwork experiences. For example:

Ecotourism has stopped

“ One of our partners is a lodge, and it now anticipates zero income for the foreseeable future as it relied entirely on tourism. Tourists used to pay a conservation levy. This income stream is now no longer viable. ”

“ To financially sustain our Blue-throated Macaw reserves we have implemented ecotourism. All tourism reservations are canceled resulting in a loss of approximately \$16,000 USD to pay for reserve maintenance. ”

“ Because where we live in the Grenadines there is no tourism. And we cannot do any tours or hike where we normally get a donation from. ”

“ Unfortunately, tourism is the backbone of Hawaii's economy and so the state's budget has shrunk dramatically. Thus, in the next year or two there will be a lot less funding available for conservation and environmental work. ”

Zoos and botanical gardens are closed to visitors, resulting in loss of revenue and funding

“ I work for a zoo which is closed. Some funding for my conservation work is sourced from entrance fees. So far, we have missed Easter break and June midterms. If the zoo cannot open in summer, there will be overall several million [in revenue] lost. This will impact our capacity to carry our conservation. ”

“ Overall, our organization has lost considerable revenue from Covid-19 (I work for a zoo). This has increased uncertainty as to funding for conservation work, though nothing has been cut currently. Otherwise we are unable to implement regular fieldwork and community work. ”

“ As NGO, we depend on donations to fund our activities. Unfortunately, since the global crisis, a lot of our donors have suspended their funding activities. For examples zoos that used to support us are unable to continue because visitors are no longer coming to the zoos. ”

“ Our organization is primarily funded through donations raised by a network of zoos and animal centers open to the public and reliant on steady footfall. With the imposition of a lockdown, the organization has lost over 80% of its funding and currently struggles to retain staff as well as the future of conservation activities that are still being conducted in the field; most importantly involving the regular feeding and monitoring of live animal collections. ”

Revenue from students has disappeared

“ [We have experienced a] Loss of revenue from international students, and to some extent domestic students. This has caused administrators to freeze some types of grant funding and freeze hiring. ”

“ It [the pandemic] has caused major delays in project completion and decrease in student enrolments. Therefore, our primary sources of funding have decreased significantly. ”

“ We run on an intern income business model. For 10 years the number of interns who complete 3-month research projects has steadily increased...All [interns] left at the onset of COVID and [we are] unlikely to receive new interns this year. All staff have taken 50% pay cuts and are doing a variety of tasks previously unrelated to their jobs to keep the organisation running. The finances of the organisation, and indeed its existence, will come under serious pressure at the tail end of this year. ”

Impact of COVID-19 on Species and Habitat

It is apparent that the impact of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown on species and their habitats was considerable. To gauge the opinions of our grant recipients about the threats to species we asked to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Threats to the species for which I was awarded a grant have increased compared to the time before the pandemic.” To gauge their opinion about the threats to habitats, we asked to what degree they agreed with the statement, “Threats to the habitat where this species lives have increased compared to the time before the pandemic.”

For species, 27% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed, 35% neither agreed nor disagreed and 37% disagreed or strongly disagreed that threats to species had increased since the time before the pandemic. For habitats, 30% strongly agreed or agreed, 31% neither agreed nor disagreed and 39% disagreed or strongly disagreed that threats to the habitat had increased since the time before the pandemic.

Figure Four: Threats to Species Have Increased
Q23. The threats to the species for which I was awarded a grant by the Fund have increased compared to the time before the Covid-19 pandemic.

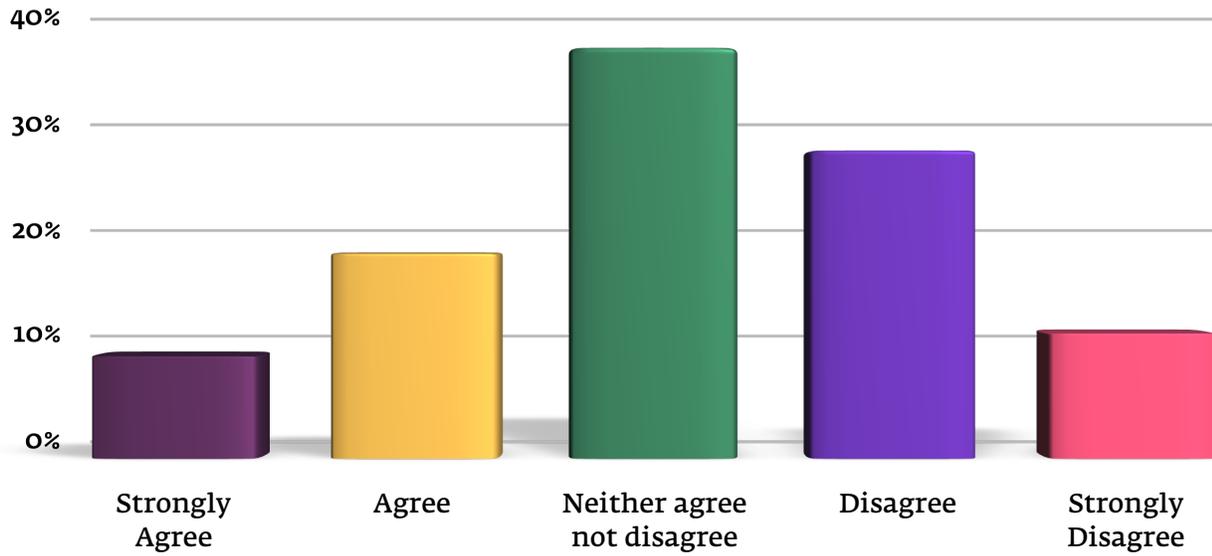
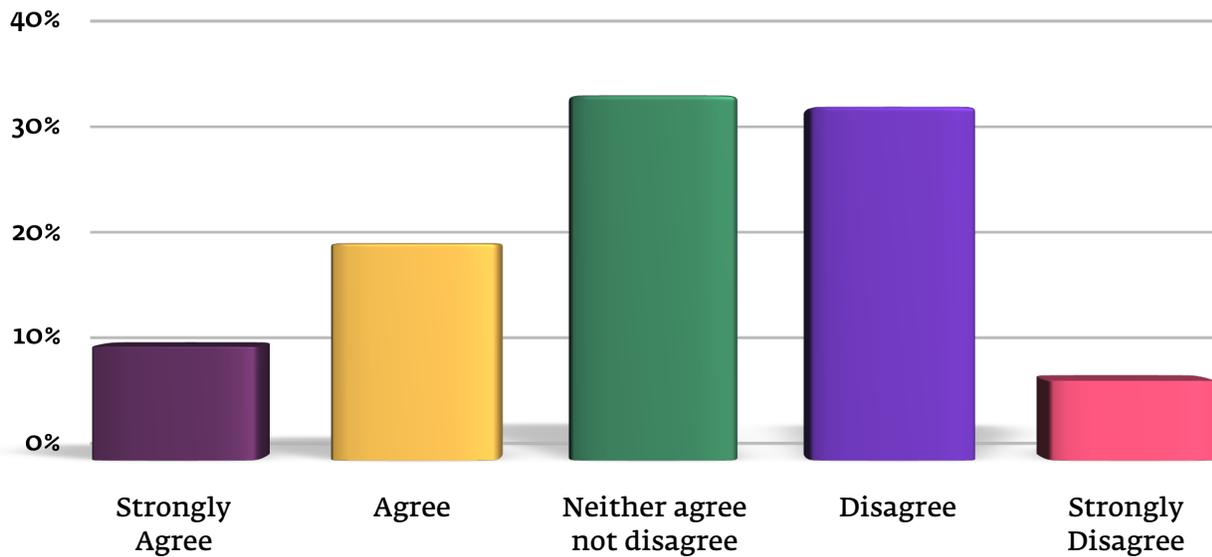


Figure Five: Threats to Habitat Have Increased
Q23. The threats to the habitat where this species lives have increased compared to the time before the Covid-19 pandemic.



While the picture is not unanimous, the results suggest that many of the conservationists surveyed in this study believe that the pandemic has had an overall negative effect on their species of interest and on the habitat in which it lives. To help clarify their thoughts, we asked an open-ended question: “Would you like to provide any additional information about potential changes in the status of this species and/or its related habitat that are a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?” More than 65% (220) of our survey respondents provided an answer.

We coded each of these 220 responses into one of four different categories: negative, positive, neutral, or irrelevant/undeterminable. Negative comments highlighted a negative impact of the pandemic on species or habitats. Neutral comments neither indicated a negative nor a positive impact of the pandemic on the species or habitat. Positive comments indicated an improvement to the species or habitat due to the pandemic; and irrelevant/undeterminable comments were neither negative, positive, or neutral but instead were interpreted to be irrelevant to the question at hand.

The comments fell overwhelmingly into the negative (45%) or neutral (35%) categories, compared to the number of positive responses to the question. A summary table of the results, as well as a few sample comments, are presented below.

Table One: Overview of responses to “Would you like to provide...information about changes to...the status of this species and/or habitat...?”

Type of Comment	Number and Percent of Total Statements	Sample Statement
Negative	99 (45%)	“Much of our work involves protecting nesting sites from nest predators, encroachment and disturbance. [Due to the restrictions] The field teams cannot get out to protect sites.”
Neutral	76 (35%)	“Too early to say; this statement would need further assessment when we can go back to the field and evaluate if things have changed”
Positive	27 (12%)	“Due to the inaccessibility of the terrain and the difficulty of mobility during this quarantine, I think that the species will be more protected.”
Irrelevant or Undeterminable	17 (8%)	“no”; “yes”; or statements that simple said “critically endangered”

To further understand the subtlety of responses, we analyzed the responses within each of the four categories highlighted above. We wanted to know if there were any themes, commonalities, or differences among the comments within each category.

Negative comments about the impact of COVID-19 on species and habitats

Many negative comments pointed to the concern that the severely negative economic impact of the pandemic would result in a **greater reliance on hunting, gathering and agriculture** among local communities.

“ *Hunting and deforestation has increased because most income generating activities has stopped.* ”

“ *...We are fearing that the lack of economic activity will encourage persons to turn to bushmeat for food...* ”

“ *[We are concerned about] Increased deforestation, poaching, increased use of herbicides by rural populations for weeding.* ”

“ *With restrictions on movement, more people are increasingly reliant on the habitat of the species, which is leading to increased destruction of the habitat.* ”

There were several comments about **increased poaching due to a reduced presence by law enforcement** and tourists in the areas where the endangered species exist.

“ *If things continue like this, and the elephant monitoring is somehow loosened, there is a risk for increased killing of elephants both by poachers and angry farmers.* ”

“ *Some owners of fields take advantage [of a lack of patrols] to carry out illegal clearing.* ”

“ *The restrictions imposed by our Government has led to illegal activities (e.g. illegal seahorse catches) to continue, and perhaps intensify, has result of in-house confinement.* ”

Other negative implications pointed to the fact that government-imposed lockdowns which were intended to reduce the spread of the virus also **limited conservationists' capacity to conduct fieldwork**. This is particularly significant when fieldwork involves preventing invasive species, such as rats and cats, from eating eggs or attacking hatchlings.

- “ Much of our work involves protecting nesting sites from nest predators, encroachment and disturbance. The field teams cannot get out to protected sites. ”
- “ The travel and physical distancing restrictions in place mean that critical predator control work cannot be completed as per calendar activities planned months ago. Predator control will resume in coming months, but it is unlikely to have the same effect after a multi-month gap. ”
- “ Covid-19 prevent us to monitor the species with the same frequency we were doing before Covid-19. This will hamper us to monitor chick growth and the appearance of predators as rats on the nesting islands. ”

Neutral comments about the impact of COVID-19 on species and habitats

On the other hand, many of the conservationists responding to the survey did not indicate a fear that the pandemic was negatively affecting their species or habitat of interest, nor did they suggest that the pandemic was a net positive for the species. Instead, they were **reserving judgement** until further investigations could be conducted. Here are a few examples of neutral statements.

- “ We haven't been able to go to the field, therefore we do not know; ”
- “ I cannot provide anything as information until we have visited the stations; ”
- “ Only a post-COVID survey would give a clear picture of the conditions or status change since the Covid-19 pandemic. ”

Other researchers indicated that **too little was known about a species in the first place** to make any judgement about the impact of the pandemic on the species:

- “ I don't think we know enough about the Steppe Whimbrel to see a firm link to any Covid-19 related impact; ”
- “ As I am working on DD (data deficient) taxa it is difficult to analyse the impact that COVID-19 will have on them. There is very little literature, and baseline analysis is needed first; ”
- “ It is hard to ascertain since we are working on a critically endangered species with very few detections over the last few decades. ”

Or the species lives in such a remote area that, **lockdown or not, it is unaffected by humans:**

“ *The habitat of mountain tapirs in Peru are so remote that I don't see threats increasing because of COVID;* ”

“ *This species is in a very remote atoll of the Solomon Islands. This species has a very small population, but the situation of people there has not changed in the last few months;* ”

“ *Fortunately, the place where my species of study is located, is a place with difficult access, so this pandemic does not affect it directly.* ”

Others simply indicated that the threats to their target species had very little to do with the pandemic or destruction of the environment, and instead were **more related to climate change** or other effects:

“ *The species is somehow connected to the upper snowline border. Since the species is an Ice age relict, the climate change and global warming affect it strongly. Ecology research must focus on these relationship in the future to explain this connection between species and specific climate conditions. I try to work on this in this summer but COVID-19 canceled this.* ”

“ *I believe that the status of the Rafetus swinhoei or its habitat is not changed during the COVID-19 pandemic...The major threats to the animals, i.e., water pollution caused by a nearby waste treatment company and a golf course, is unchanged before and during the outbreak.* ”

Positive Comments about the impact of Covid-19 on species and habitats

Of the relatively very few (27 out of 220) positive comments that were submitted by our conservationists, most were hopeful that the movement restrictions implemented by authorities would reduce pressure on species, including:

“ *There are sufficient reasons to conjure that habitats for fungi are less disturbed now due to restrictions on human movement and activities imposed by the Government as a result of Covid-19 pandemic. This will have a long-term effect on the conservation of those fungi threatened due to human interference and related activities.* ”

“ *There have been unexpected environmental benefits through reduced human impacts compared with pre-pandemic, but these are not likely to be sustained.* ”

“ Most of the study areas were largely occupied by tourists every year during this time because of the school time vacation in India. But this year, because of the lockdown there are no tourism activities are taking up. So I think it will be beneficial for both the species and habitat. ”

As the comments exemplify, the pandemic and its associated social controls and economic fallout do not necessarily mean threats to species and their habitats will be reduced. In fact, many survey respondents are very concerned that the threats will increase. Some see these threats increasing already, others want to reserve judgement until further investigation. What is clear is that the pandemic and its associated economic and social effects are not a net positive for species and their habitats. Threats continue, and while some may decrease or go away temporarily, they will not disappear and work needs to continue to save the world's most endangered species.

Summary and Conclusion

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on species conservation are significant, according to the results of this survey. These effects generally fall into three broad categories including those associated with operations, finances and species/habitat. The programmatic work of many conservationists across the world has stopped due to social distancing norms, restrictions on physical movements, closures, and/or concerns about spreading or contracting the coronavirus. No matter the reason, the scope of the impact on conservation activities is dramatic with more than 80% of survey respondents reporting a stoppage of their conservation activities. While this may be temporary, it may also be longer-term with many conservationist reporting delays of up to a year or more due to missed annual migrations, seasonal changes or opportunities lost. In cases where conservationists were working to control invasive species, the work stoppage may have significant effects on the viability of endemic species.

The pandemic has significantly disrupted the financing of conservation activities. Restrictions on travel has eliminated ecotourism which in turn has impacted funding for conservation activities. The fees a tourist might pay to snorkel a reef in a distant seaside village have gone dry. Revenue from hikes guided by naturalists is lost. Furthermore, zoos, aquariums and botanic gardens have been closed to visitors which has resulted in lost revenue from ticket and concession sales, revenue that would normally go toward funding conservation. Yet, these same facilities still incur expenses related to caring for the species in their collections. Donations to conservation charities have decreased during the pandemic. All of which is resulting in a significant disruption to the economic model of conservation in general.

The results of the survey do not unambiguously point to a positive or negative effect on species and their habitat; however, the pandemic has negatively affected many species. Indeed, many of our grant recipients reported the potential for very negative effects on some of the world's most

threatened species. These negative effects include an increase in habitat loss due to increased agricultural efforts, increased poaching due to economic hardships brought on by the economic fallout from the pandemic, less enforcement of environmental protections due to reduced government or tourism presence. Although a significant proportion (35%) of respondents to our survey remained neutral or undecided about the effects of the pandemic on species, many of them were simply withholding judgement until further assessment could be conducted. On the bright side, a number of grant recipients also reported positive effects on their species/habitat of interest, citing less pressure from humans as a significant reason for the improvement. Therefore, although the survey results are mixed — it revealed both positive and negative effects — one cannot conclude that species are doing better today than before the pandemic. Indeed, many face considerable new obstacles to survival.

The MBZ Fund will continue to monitor the effects of the pandemic on conservation. While the short-term effects of the pandemic on conservation and species are becoming clearer, the MBZ Fund will continue to engage our current grant recipients to measure the medium and long-term impact of the pandemic on conservation. Meanwhile, the MBZ Fund continues to accept, review and process grants applications; having recently distributed \$500,000 to species conservation projects in April and May 2020. Today, more than 600 grant applications are currently being reviewed for the next round of funding which will commence in Autumn 2020. The Fund has continuously demonstrated its dedication and commitment to conservation over the past decade by supporting more than 2,100 projects in 160 countries to the benefit of more than 1,350 different species and subspecies. This support will continue even during the pandemic. In addition to its role of providing financial support for conservation, the MBZ Fund will continue to leverage its global access to conservationists, as well as its network of conservation decision-makers and stakeholders to ensure conservation is well supported into the long term future. The MBZ Fund is committed to species conservation, its practitioners and the well-being of species and nature worldwide.

For email contact, please write to equiries@mbzf.org



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