
Island Biodiversity in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Biodiversity on oceanic islands is characterised by unique biogeographic, phylogenetic and functional characteristics. Islands hold a disproportionate amount of the world's biodiversity, and they have also experienced a disproportionate loss of it. Following human contact island biodiversity has sustained negative human impacts increasing in rate and magnitude as islands transitioned from primary, through secondary to tertiary economies. In contrast to continents, on islands habitat transformation and invasive species have historically been the major threats to biodiversity, and although these threats will continue in new forms, new impacts such as climate change are emerging. Islands thus are microcosms for the emerging biodiversity and socioecological landscapes of the Anthropocene. Islands will require novel strategies for their protection and restoration, including mainstreaming biodiversity in cultural and production landscapes and incorporating novel ecosystems, but they present great opportunities to do so.

Keywords: Anthropocene, biodiversity, nature conservation, novel ecosystem, invasive species, oceanic island

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