

Marketing diversity: a response to Joseph and colleagues

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Introduction

Flagships species are used by conservation groups for a range of social marketing activities, such as raising awareness and encouraging behavior change (Caro 2010). They are also widely used for fundraising and these campaigns can be categorized into three approaches. The first uses the species to provide a recognizable “face” for issues such as climate change; the second uses the species to play a similar role for an organization. The third approach is the one highlighted by Joseph and colleagues and involves fundraising for the species directly, while also raising the profile and credibility of broader conservation issues and the associated organization. This final type remains popular, as the public often prefer projects with explicit benefits for their favorite species, but as Joseph and colleagues point out, they can limit funding for nontarget species (Joseph *et al.* 2011).

This is why conservation and marketing experts must work together to produce new schemes that better align donor preferences with conservation goals (Smith *et al.* 2010). Thus, we welcome the proposal by Joseph and colleagues to market the recently developed New

Zealand Department of Conservation’s prioritization exercise that provides a fully costed and efficient plan for conserving the country’s most threatened species (Joseph *et al.* 2009, 2011). Moreover, we think, this marketing could create a new project-based flagship and so provide broader benefits than simply conserving the target species. This is because marketing the New Zealand plan would raise awareness about this innovative approach, as well as strengthen the credibility of the organizations that developed it, and so encourage wider adoption.

However, creating successful new flagships is often expensive, as initial awareness is nonexistent, and campaigns must resonate with at least one group of donors. Therefore, we would recommend that marketing the New Zealand plan should still involve adopting a systematic process for developing the flagship campaign (Veríssimo *et al.* 2011). When it comes to identifying the target audience, anecdotal evidence suggests that the public generally care more about aesthetics than cost-effectiveness. However, business-minded donor agencies and philanthropists have responded to similar messages

and could respond well to this type of campaign (Jepson and Ladle 2010). In addition, there is further scope for building on the “flagship project” role because New Zealand is a developed nation and the plan was produced by their state conservation agency. Thus, new campaigns could seek to persuade the New Zealand public and Treasury that their country is a world leader in conservation planning and that their taxes would be well spent on conserving these species.

Focusing on this New Zealand plan also opens up a number of questions about how best to market this type of approach: funding could come from a wide range of sources and it will be challenging to develop credible and powerful campaign messages that do not overly restrict funding options. Hence, once again, we would argue that conservation scientists, practitioners, and marketers must work together to develop marketing approaches that match the effectiveness of these new conservation projects.

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