



Designing Field Studies for Biodiversity Conservation

Peter Feinsinger

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Anyone working in biodiversity conservation or field ecology should understand and utilize the commonsense process of scientific inquiry: observing surroundings, framing questions, answering those questions through well-designed studies, and, in many cases, applying results to decision making. Yet the interdisciplinary nature of conservation means that many workers are not well versed in the methods of science and may misunderstand or mistrust this indispensable tool. Designing Field Studies for Biodiversity Conservation addresses that problem by offering a comprehensible, practical guide to using scientific inquiry in conservation work. In an engaging and accessible style, award-winning tropical ecologist and teacher Peter Feinsinger melds concepts, methods, and intellectual tools into a unique approach to answering environmental questions through field studies. Focusing on the fundamentals of common sense, independent thinking, and natural history, he considers: framing the question and designing the study interpreting and applying results through judicious use of statistical inference taking into account the natural history of plants, animals, and landscapes monitoring and assessing progress through approaches such as "bioindicator species" or "species diversity measures" helping other interested parties (park guards, local communities, school teachers) use scientific inquiry in addressing their own concernsDetailed appendixes explain technical issues, while numerous sidebars and illustrations provide important background and thought-provoking exercises. Throughout, the author challenges the reader to integrate conceptual thinking with on-the-ground practice in order to make conservation truly effective. Feinsinger concentrates on examples from Latin America but stresses that the approach applies to local conservation concerns or field biology questions in any landscape. Designing Field Studies for Biodiversity Conservation is an essential handbook for staff and researchers working with conservation institutions or projects worldwide, as well as for students and professionals in field ecology, wildlife biology, and related areas.

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