



Barbets' Duet

Barbets are tropical birds related to woodpeckers & toucans. Some Afrotropical barbets sing in duet, creating the sound of one voice.¹

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Objectives

This project has three objectives: (1) to create new institutional forms which integrate ecological principles in everyday social, political and economic affairs; (2) to use these new institutions to generate incomes for people whose knowledge serves to maintain and increase environmental resources, especially biodiversity; (3) to test whether this income can be derived from greenhouse gases emissions trading or similar environmental trading schemes.

The rationale

After 250 years of industrialisation and globalisation, environmental goods, including biodiversity, are increasingly scarce. Over all, modern institutions throughout the world are failing to protect and strengthen ecosystems. They are also failing to provide adequate jobs and incomes to rural peoples.

Historically, biodiversity has been supported by traditional knowledge and institutional arrangements everywhere, but particularly in rural societies of Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia. The knowledge and institutions of these societies therefore have increasing value as environmental goods are increasingly scarce. However, both skills and knowledge are disappearing as older generations die out and younger generations cannot make a living using traditional practices and understanding.

There is at present no effective institution capable of rewarding people for their environmental knowledge. Therefore, a new institution – or institutions – is needed to create incomes for people who support, protect and increase biodiversity and other environmental goods. By rewarding people who have sound environmental knowledge and land management skills, popular incomes can improve while also increasing environmental health. This project will focus on biodiversity.

Working assumptions

We still do not know what institutional forms will be able to link traditional ecological management with modern market mechanisms in ways that benefit rural people, biodiversity and investors.

We are guided by several working assumptions. 1) The primary relationship is between people who manage the land (including marine resources) and those who manage financial markets. To increase healthy, bio-diverse landscapes, both types of managers need to learn new skills and develop new rules in the context of their practical affairs. 2) For this to occur, environmental managers (traditional and modern) and financial market managers need to engage directly with each other. 3) This engagement will be used to design multiple experiments to test different institutional arrangements linking peoples, land and markets. 4) In designing these experiments, both modern and traditional knowledge have something to contribute. 5) Each experiment will have people from different cultures working together equitably in practical settings. 6) Multiple experiments will stimulate rapid learning.

¹ Photos: red and yellow barbet, Tarangire, Tanzania, <http://www.birdingafrica.net/page69.html>. See "A review of duetting, sociality and speciation in some African barbets (capitonidae)" in *Condor* 85:323-332 © The Cooper Ornithological Society 1983. <http://Elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Condor/files/issues/v085n03/p0323-p0332.pdf>

Plan of work

... start with what is there and what is needed ...

This is a twenty-year project, entering its first two years.

Year One

1. Test the conceptual framework outlined here with as many people as possible in different cultures.
2. Identify a group of associates interested in working with these ideas and developing the initial working principles of the project.
3. Jointly select a small number of Barbet learning sites where these ideas and principles can be tested.
4. Identify other useful knowledge and experience from anywhere in the world.
5. Identify potential sources of financial support, both commercial and philanthropic.

Year Two

1. Organise cross-postings between Barbet sites. Visitors from each Barbet site visit another site in another culture to learn by observation & activity.
2. Convene the first meeting of people from Barbet learning sites.
 - What did we notice?
 - What have we learned?
 - What might we do next?
 - What should we stop doing?
3. Submit applications for financial support, from both commercial and philanthropic organisations.

What is a Barbet Learning Site?

A Barbet Learning Site is a place where people are actively, experimentally engaged in new ways of managing the land or creating environmental markets. These sites are places where learning is not abstract, but tested in daily life where people depend on these activities for their well-being.

People who want their place to become a Barbet Learning Site need the following qualifications:

- be actively engaged in experimental work consistent with Barbet goals;
- be willing to share their experience with people from other Barbet sites;
- be willing to learn from all cultures and all cultures of knowledge;
- be willing to endorse and shape the objectives and principles of the Barbets' Duet.

Why become a Barbet Learning Site?

People involved in creating environmental markets or in land management could gain the following:

- increase the financial and biological productivity of existing activities;
- experiment with new activities providing new benefits & returns;
- learn from others;
- contribute to the invention of an institution which will integrate ecological principles in everyday life while creating new incomes for people who maintain or increase environmental health.