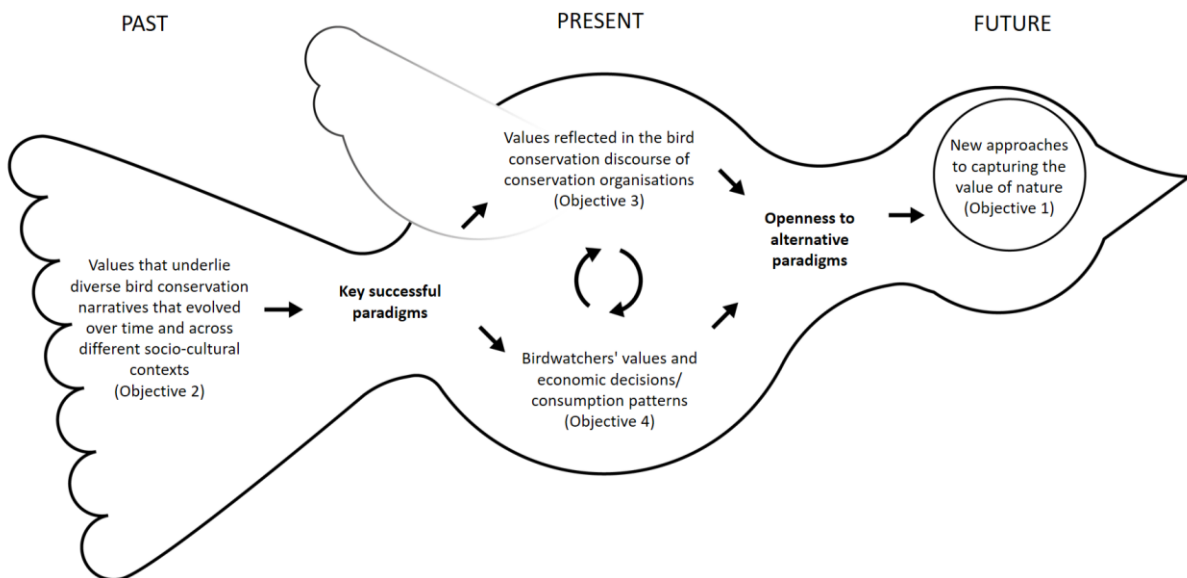


A bird's-eye view of how the natural environment fits into economics: Searching for alternative paradigms by analysing bird conservation narratives

This project sets an ambitious overall objective to forge new approaches to capturing the value of nature in the part of sustainability discourse that has become dominated by economics. Indeed, economics has grown into a leading perspective on how human societies should be organised, including how human societies interact with nature. Yet, it is excessively simplistic with regard to the value of nature and tends to disregard other perspectives on what might otherwise be seen as valuable. Based on the case study of birds and the diverse aspects of their value, this project addresses broader nature conservation and sustainability implications for economics – or how studying the value of birds can help us reform economics. Birds are seen here as connectors between people and the larger environment.

This project will substantially advance research in sustainability science, ecological economics, conservation science, and sustainable consumption. It opens new horizons for the debate on the importance of nature to people because, based on the specific and broadly relevant case study of birds, it explores a huge diversity of alternative paradigms and the opportunities to use them to reform the dominant discourse. To put economic thinking in the proper social-ecological context, this project investigates the root causes of the dominance of economic discourse in thinking about nature. It sets out to shape an alternative discourse based on a broad review of values and paradigms other than economics that evolved to motivate bird conservation over the 150 years of bird conservation.

The four objectives of this project represent four areas shown in the figure below. The overarching Objective 1 is the broadest, and it is supported by the three other objectives that focus specifically on birds.



Objective 1. To forge new approaches to capturing the value of nature in the part of the sustainability discourse that has become dominated by economics. This project contributes to the ongoing debates on how to best motivate conservation, particularly how to change the dominant economic discourse to acknowledge other worldviews and paradigms.

Objective 2. To study how the diverse values of birds have been articulated and leveraged over time and across different socio-cultural contexts. This project provides a comprehensive review of arguments used to motivate bird conservation in different historical and socio-cultural contexts.

Objective 3. To study the diverse rationales that underlie bird conservation currently used by conservation organisations. This will be related to finding out what narratives are used to promote bird conservation by Western and non-Western bird conservation organisations and the rationale for using these arguments, as revealed by conservation practitioners.

4. To study birdwatchers' values and economic decisions/consumption patterns and their openness to different conservation rationales. This project attempts to understand the values that drive birdwatchers' behaviour and consumption patterns, both in the context of birdwatching tourism and their everyday consumption. While birdwatchers seem to exhibit higher environmental awareness than the general public, they do not necessarily properly recognise the broader environmental impacts of their lifestyles. This project explores the potential for transforming lifestyles based on the sense of nature connectedness.