

ATBC STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020

# Fostering the Scientific Understanding and Conservation of Tropical Environments



This Strategic Plan prioritizes the activities and operations of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) for 2015-2020. The Strategic Plan was formally adopted at the ATBC General Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, in July 2015.

## WHAT IS ATBC?

The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) is a scientific professional society formed in 1963 as the Association for Tropical Biology. In 2003 the society changed its name to the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation.

The ATBC is global in scope, membership, and objectives, functioning as an international body to promote research, education, conservation, and communication of tropical biology. We are students, researchers, educators, and conservation practitioners concerned with issues of science, conservation, development, and environmental policy in the tropics. We have over 900 members from 67 countries. The society holds annual meetings around the world, publishes the scientific journal *Biotropica*, and is increasingly engaged in conservation and capacity building activities internationally.



## CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

The ATBC supports biology and conservation scientists working in the tropics. The development of skills and knowledge among scientists is essential for robust tropical biology and conservation science. The ATBC Capacity Building Program provides opportunities for gaining new experiences, knowledge, and skills through Skills Training Workshops, the Mentoring Program, Early Career Activities, and Communications and Advocacy Training Sessions.

## CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The Conservation Committee was formed in 2004. It seeks to foster an understanding of current key conservation issues and conflicts, and proposes feasible ways of addressing them. It supports local, regional, national, and global initiatives that address current and potential threats to biodiversity, ecosystems, and linked human livelihoods. The Conservation Committee initiates and supports outreach and capacity building activities to develop and strengthen expertise in conservation-related scientific activities.



## ATBC CHAPTERS

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In 2006 the ATBC launched an Asia-Pacific Chapter to promote tropical biology and conservation in the region. The Student and Early Career SCientist (SECSCI) chapter of ATBC was created in 2013 to enhance engagement and support of students and early-career scientists. Other regional and thematic chapters are in the process of being established.

## PUBLICATION

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*Biotropica* is the ATBC's scientific journal, and the world's leading tropical biology journal. First published in 1969, *Biotropica* is now available to around 4,300 institutions worldwide. Over 100 peer-reviewed articles are published in six issues annually.

## CONTACT AND COMMUNICATION

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## INTRODUCTION

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The ATBC has a history spanning more than 50 years since its creation in 1963. Over this time we have grown and evolved from a relatively small society with a neotropical focus, to one that is global in its membership and influence. In recognition of the alarming environmental crises that our planet faces, many of which are primarily tropical in nature, the ATBC's remit has expanded to encompass conservation, while not losing sight of its original and central purpose of tropical biology.

The ATBC's primary purpose is to support the scientific community in tropical biology. The 21st century has brought new challenges to both science and conservation practice. It has also provided new opportunities through technological and conceptual developments. Both challenges and opportunities have generated a new purpose for the ATBC that is driven and informed by a new generation of scientists and conservation practitioners.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

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The development of our new ATBC Strategic Plan is therefore timely. It builds upon the successes of the past, but looks forward to future challenges. We recognize that the ATBC can respond to societal and environmental needs by improving its support of the international tropical biology community. This Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide us towards this future.

A strong sense of collegiality lies at the heart of the ATBC community. The Strategic Plan recognizes the central value of collegiality to the success of the ATBC, and seeks to build upon this great strength. We look forward to implementing the Strategic Plan together with our members and partners.



## MISSION

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To foster scientific understanding and conservation of tropical ecosystems by supporting research, collaboration, capacity building, and communication among tropical biologists and conservationists.

## PURPOSE

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The ATBC fosters collaboration and information sharing across a broad community of tropical biology professionals. The society provides outlets for research dissemination, and educational and funding opportunities, particularly for early career scientists working across the tropics. As a diverse community of science professionals, the ATBC provides a credible, collective, and authoritative vision of tropical biology and conservation issues that underpin public policy and management action.

## VALUES

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The ATBC believes that biological science is essential for an understanding of tropical environments that serves conservation and sustainable development. Specifically, the ATBC holds that:

Natural systems and the biodiversity they contain have both intrinsic and utilitarian values;

Evidence-based science is critical for understanding how tropical ecosystems function, and how humans affect them;

Sustainable development depends on effective stewardship of ecosystems and their component species;

Biological sciences and related disciplines are essential foundations for effective decision making, and must inform environmental policy in the tropics;

Communicating tropical biological science to the global public is vital for enhancing the understanding of environmental and conservation values.





## **PRINCIPLES**

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The ATBC promotes inclusiveness and collaboration, in order to create a sense of collegiality that is built on five principles:

### **Supportive**

A society that fosters mutual support, mentoring and guidance across its membership;

### **Inclusive**

A diverse membership, inclusive of age groups, genders, cultures, professional positions, and geographical locations, benefits and advances the society;

### **Participatory**

A membership that is informed and engaged in the activities of the society;

### **Transparent**

An open society in which decision-making processes are clear and participatory;

### **Multidisciplinary**

A society that encompasses scientific breadth across all relevant disciplines.

## STRATEGIC FOCI

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In responding to our mission and purpose, and taking account of our values and principles, five core issues form the strategic foci for 2015-2020:

- 1 Support the development of tropical biology and related interdisciplinary scientific approaches;
- 2 Communicate tropical biological science among the science and conservation community;
- 3 Foster the application of science in conservation policy and management action;
- 4 Grow the society by serving the needs and interests of the tropical biology research community;
- 5 Build organizational capacity and financial stability.



# 1

## Communicate world leading tropical biological science across the scientific community

A fundamental purpose of the ATBC is to support and disseminate high-quality tropical biological science through its peer-reviewed journal, scientific meetings, and educational opportunities. As such, it is imperative that we strengthen our science communication pathways.



### Appraise and publish high quality original research

Improve the recognition and outreach of *Biotropica* by raising its impact, and by capitalizing on new forms of communication and media outreach to promote its scientific content.

### Allow *Biotropica* to adapt

Ensure that the journal is sufficiently flexible to respond to emerging areas of science, conservation and practice, as well as the changing landscape of scientific publishing.

### Hold regular scientific meetings for the tropical biology community

Continue to provide forums for interaction and information exchange across the international science community.

### Improve the accessibility and appeal of the scientific meetings

Update the format for the annual meetings to enhance opportunities for interaction and discussion across members and the international science community.

### Enhance representative participation in the international meetings

Prioritize annual meeting locations that broaden the ATBC membership globally, as well as provide remote access to meeting content to all members.

### Diversify the array of communication pathways among the membership

Increase communication platforms for members through an active website, and online newsletters and network platforms.

# 2

## Support the development of tropical biology and related interdisciplinary scientific approaches

The ATBC supports the development of biology and conservation scientists working in the tropics. The development of skills and knowledge among scientists is essential for the development of robust tropical biology and conservation science. The society therefore strives to provide opportunities for gaining new experiences, knowledge, perspectives and skills, through mentorship, networking and courses. These goals will be met through the ATBC Capacity Building Program.

### Establish mechanisms for identifying educational needs

Create a network through which educational needs can be communicated.

### Provide a wide array of courses and workshops

Capitalize on the existing expertise within the society to provide targeted short courses and workshops on topics that respond to the needs of the membership.

### Establish an online library of instructional resources

Develop a repository for course notes, guided learning materials, virtual lectures, and exercises.

### Enhance the effectiveness of scientific networking and mentoring

Improve networking opportunities, particularly among students and early career scientists, by providing increased opportunities for interaction and access to mentors.

### Provide financial support for early career scientists

Establish mechanisms to facilitate the participation of scientists from tropical regions in ATBC activities and meetings.



# 3

## Foster the application of science in conservation policy and management action

The application of sound science in conservation and policy is an essential prerequisite for effective resource management. The ATBC must explore pathways by which science can best inform policy and management at local, national, regional, and global levels.

### Facilitate communication and collaboration with managers and policy-makers

Ensure participation from, and engagement with, the public and private sectors and the NGO community at international meetings and other ATBC events to foster an inclusive dialogue.

### Improve uptake of policy and management relevant research through partnerships

Establish partnerships with appropriately positioned individuals, professional societies, NGOs, and international organizations to improve the uptake of research outputs.

### Raise awareness of urgent conservation issues

Produce scientifically robust resolutions and declarations on topics of urgent conservation concern in order to increase awareness and contribute relevant information to decision-making processes.

### Improve the accessibility of scientific outputs

Build capacity and provide training to re-frame scientific results in more accessible formats that are relevant to policy and management.

### Improve use of media outlets

Provide training on how to best secure media interest and coverage for conservation and policy relevant research.

### Achieve wider public outreach

Communicate science to the wider public through more effective use of the media and by an ATBC public lecture series.



## Grow the society by serving the needs and interests of the tropical biology and conservation research community

The ATBC can develop as a professional society by responding to the needs of tropical biologists, and users of tropical research outputs. Its successful development is predicated on a strong membership that is actively engaged in implementing its activities, shaping its structure, and directing its course of action.

### Identify the needs and interests of the tropical biology and conservation research community

Regular appraisal of current and prospective members' motivations for joining the ATBC, and the benefits they derive or would like to derive, from membership.

### Improve member retention and encourage new members

The benefits of ATBC membership should be regularly appraised and communicated to the scientific community.

### Analyze and report on membership trends

Statistics to be kept and updated on the number and distribution of members.

### Network with other professional bodies

Promote collaboration with other relevant science and conservation institutions, regionally and globally.

# 5

## Build financial stability and organizational capacity

The ATBC's organizational capacity, coordination, and funding base need to be strengthened to deliver the strategic plan. A strong and transparent organizational structure is required to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the ATBC Council committees, and of ATBC Chapters.

### Encourage participation in organizational activities

The ATBC must strive for more inclusive dialogues in decision making processes. New ideas and proposals should be disseminated to the membership for feedback and comment.

### Decision-making process should be transparent

Major strategic or organizational changes are to be informed by prior consultation with the membership, and any decisions made should be clearly announced and explained.

### Capitalize on existing strengths within the society

The breadth of skills and experience across the society needs to be recognized and harnessed.

### Facilitate the emergence of regional and thematic chapters

Many activities will be more efficient and accessible when undertaken by regional or thematic chapters. The development of chapters, led by appropriate representatives, is encouraged and supported.

### Develop long-term budgets for the separate objectives of the strategic plan

Realizing the objectives of the strategic plan will require funds, and funding allocation should be appropriately aligned to priority objectives.

### Enhance revenue acquisition

Create a business and investment plan that specifies how income will be secured to achieve strategic goals and objectives, and that ensures investment choices and management are aligned with ATBC's values.

# Fostering the Scientific Understanding and Conservation of Tropical Environments



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