



Seminar Invitation

"Mental Models in Community-based Conservation Projects"

Presented by: *Duan Biggs*

Duan Biggs is currently working as a research officer for CSIRO Resource Futures. Prior to coming to Australia Duan lived in South Africa where he worked on and researched integrated conservation and ecotourism development projects. Duan has conducted work, consultancies and research in 6 African countries. He is interested in applying resilience theory and adaptive management tools to biodiversity conservation and sustainability challenges in developing regions.

Where: ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies Conference Room, JCU. Video link to CMS Conference Room, UQ

When: Friday 22nd June, 1.00pm - 1.30pm

Purpose: A draft run for a presentation at the Society for Conservation Biology Conference in South Africa in July.

Abstract: Mental models are defined as the models people use to interpret the world around them and these are partially culturally derived. Conservation practice in many developing countries operates in a multi-cultural arena and therefore different actors have different mental models in interpreting a project's, desired objectives, actions and outcomes. This presents a key challenge to conservation scientists and managers. In-depth interviews were used to investigate these issues in community-based birding tourism initiatives in South Africa.

The results demonstrate differences in the perceptions and world views of community beneficiaries, project managers and stakeholders with respect to levels of project success and stakeholder conflict. Evidence of differences in mental models is also shown through the differences in the expectations of the roles of the different project actors. Organizational frameworks that operate for five years or more in a transparent, participatory fashion are recommended to bridge these differences over time. This requires a shift away from traditional project business models which are designed for project sustainability over a relatively short period of time to models which embrace the long term commitment required for multi-cultural settings.