

## **NEEDS, METHODS AND MEANS**

(Keynote lecture)

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is an increasing groundswell of attention being given to the conservation status of plants especially through the Convention on Biological Diversity. A developing global strategy recognizes fundamental objectives: integrated *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation, research on the biology, decline, monitoring and information management, assessment of the social benefits of plant diversity, and public awareness. Targets have been suggested for a number of key indicators. Do ferns and their allies need such a strategy? This question is addressed from several points of view, especially their potential value as indicators of environmental health, as the descendants of ancient lineages of plants, their extraordinarily wide distribution combined with habitat specificity, and their widespread cultural value and public recognition. Although perhaps better known taxonomically than many other plant groups, there are significant gaps in our knowledge of ferns, especially their biology, distribution and conservation status. A tendency to be concentrated in regions and habitats at risk, and frequent local endemism especially on islands, means that a significant proportion of species may be at risk. The developing global strategy and the recently agreed Species Survival Commission conservation strategy for plants provide a robust framework for completion of an Action Plan for the conservation of pteridophytes, and development of guidelines for its implementation where it is most needed.