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“The Shifting Baseline Syndrome as a Connective Concept for More Informed and Just Responses to Global Environmental Change.”

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1. The concept of the ‘shifting baseline syndrome’ has assisted researchers in understanding how expectations for the health of the environment deteriorate, despite known, often widespread, and significant impacts from human activities. The concept has been used to demonstrate that more accurate assessment of historical ecosystem decline can be achieved by balancing contemporary perceptions with other sorts of evidence, and is now widely referred to in studies assessing environmental change.
2. The potential of this concept as a model for examining and addressing complex and multidimensional social-ecological interactions, however, is underexplored and current approaches have limitations.
3. We perceive the shifting baseline syndrome as a rare working example of a ‘connective concept’ that can work across fields of science, the humanities and others and that re-envisioning the concept in this way would assist us to establish more complete, true and reflective environmental baselines.
4. Through our diverse author team, from a range of disciplines, geographies and cultural backgrounds, we identify gaps in current knowledge of the shifting baseline syndrome concept, its use and its effects, and describe several approaches that could be taken to improve investigations and capitalise on the connectivity that it fosters. This re-envisioning could support a more informed and just way forward in addressing global environmental change. (Abstract)

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