

# Managing Sports Events for Nature

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Convention on  
Biological Diversity

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# Introduction





Sports events interact with the natural environment in many ways. This is most obvious for outdoor sports that take place in green spaces, on water bodies or in wilder, natural areas such as deserts, mountains, forests or coastal environments. These natural settings are often what distinguish the events and give them particular appeal to participants and fans alike. It is also true, unfortunately, some sport events can have negative impacts on wildlife and their habitats. In most cases this is primarily due to lack of awareness and knowledge and could so easily be avoided through careful planning and operation of the events.

Although less obvious, even sports events that take place in indoor venues with no visible natural component, can still have a connection with nature. This may be through the materials purchased for staging the event, or possibly the local setting for the venue, where approach roads and surrounding landscaped areas may support wild flora and fauna.

Wherever they are situated, all events have the potential to celebrate nature and promote positive messages about how sport can support the conservation of nature. By avoiding impacts and promoting conservation, sports events can be a win for nature, as well as a win for sport.

This guide aims to provide a simple and practical introduction to managing sports events with nature in mind. It is not possible in a short document to cover all situations and delve into detailed explanations. However, we hope this will be a valuable starting point. For those requiring more detailed information please refer to the full IUCN Guide: Mitigating biodiversity impacts of sports events, which was published in 2020. For practical information on how to optimise understanding of nature in relation to your event, the Sports for Nature Urban Playbook is an excellent resource.





## Who should read this guide

While this guide has relevance to all types and levels of sports events, the primary focus is to help organisers who do not have ready access to professional expertise, or the resources to hire their own specialists. Large scale events will typically have the greatest risks and impacts on nature, but these will be complex situations requiring detailed impact assessments and management solutions that go beyond the scope of a small, general guide.

This guide is therefore aimed at the owners, organisers and managers of events and hosting venues, where you need to take account of natural environment issues but lack the knowledge, time or resources to do-it-yourself.

If you have sufficient resources, or you are aware of a significant issue related to nature that might affect your event, you should always seek specialist, expert help that can be applied to your specific situation.



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# Terminology

There is a lot of complex technical language used in the field of nature protection and conservation. Specialists often use terms like biodiversity, ecology and ecosystems. It is hard to avoid them entirely, but in this guide we have tried to limit the use of scientific terms and refer mostly to nature, nature conservation and wildlife. Please take a moment to learn the following definitions.

## Biodiversity

The variety of life on Earth, including plants, animals, and microorganisms, essential for healthy ecosystems. Short for biological diversity.

## Ecology

The branch of biology that deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings.

## Ecological

The adjective form of ecology, often used as in ecological study, or ecological impact.

## Ecosystem

A dynamic complex of plant, animal, and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit

## Habitat

The place or type of site where an organism or population of a species naturally occurs

## Invasive alien species

Species whose introduction and/or spread outside their natural distribution threaten indigenous nature

## Nature

The entire natural world, including living organisms and non-living elements like geology, water, and climate

## Nature conservation

The practice of protecting and caring for natural habitats and wildlife for the long-term benefit of people and the environment

## Natural environment

All non-human-made conditions, and resources on Earth, including forests, rivers, mountains, wildlife, climate, and natural resources like air and water.

## Protected area

A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem functions and cultural values

## Sensitive

Used to refer to natural habitats and/or wildlife that are prone to disturbance from human activity. An alternative term sometimes used is 'fragile'.

## Threatened species

Species categorised as Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable by The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The Red List is widely recognised as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species.

## Wildlife

Living, non-domesticated animals and plants (fauna and flora).



## Why should sport event organisers care about nature?

It's very simple: sporting excellence goes hand in hand with a healthy environment. As an event owner or organiser, you want a successful event with great, exciting performances enjoyed by all participants. Taking care of the natural environment is a fundamental part of achieving the best outcomes, providing optimal conditions for those competing, watching or working at the event.

It matters also outside of competition time. A healthy environment helps athletes and players train and prepare for their event. It gives them time and space in which to relax away from the intensity of competition and contact with nature is known to be valuable for mental wellbeing and helping recovery from injuries.

Globally, nature is under immense pressure (see table below). If left unchecked, this will increasingly impact the world of sports and sports events. Whatever the sport – indoor, outdoor, elite, senior or junior – paying attention to nature is an integral part of getting it right for all concerned.





## How sport events relate to nature

IUCN defines five key pressures that impact the natural environment. The table below shows how the potential impact of sport events on nature relates to these pressures.

Key pressures defined by IUCN	Potential impacts of sports events
 Changes in the use of land, sea or water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ <b>Habitat loss or modification</b> – physical change to natural features</li><li>→ <b>Soil erosion and compaction</b> – impacts on drainage systems, tree roots, landslips</li></ul>
 Invasive Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ <b>Introduction of non-native, invasive species</b> – biosecurity issue</li></ul>
 Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ <b>Pollution</b> – litter, noise, dust, artificial lighting or inappropriate use of chemicals</li></ul>
 Direct exploitation of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ <b>Depletion of water resources</b> – over exploitation can impact aquatic ecosystems</li><li>→ <b>Unsustainable sourcing of goods</b> – typically related to timber, food and clothing</li><li>→ <b>Disturbance or damage to wildlife populations</b> – impacts on species</li></ul>
 Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>→ <b>Carbon emissions</b> – main impact areas are energy, catering, logistics and transport</li></ul>



## Opportunities

In terms of opportunities, sports events can be great vehicles for promoting nature conservation initiatives and sometimes directly implementing practical projects:



### Special projects

Initiatives to improve and conserve nature on site or in local area



### Awareness raising

Through event messaging and communication channels



### Financial support

Fundraising and financing of relevant conservation initiatives



### Commercial partnerships

Involving sponsors to support nature conservation initiatives



### Partnership working with local authorities and voluntary organisations

Mutual support to achieve conservation outcomes.



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# Applying the Sports for Nature Principles

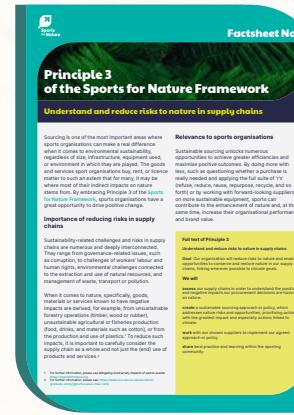
A good basis for determining your approach to nature conservation and your event, is to use the four principles of the Sports for Nature Framework:



## Principle 1

### Protect nature and avoid damage to natural habitats and species

This is about the potential physical impact your event might cause to the natural environment and certain species of flora and fauna and their habitats. Impacts may occur through damage caused by installation of temporary event infrastructure, disturbance to wildlife from event operations or crowds of spectators, or discharges of pollutants into soil, water or the air.



## Principle 3

### Understand and reduce risks to nature in your supply chains

Many of the goods and services required for managing a sport event can have an impact on nature due to their production and transportation before they reach you and through their onward use or disposal after the event. Typical high risk items are timber, certain foods and clothing. Even if you are a low impact, indoor sport event with little engagement in the first two principles, your purchasing choices can have significant implications for nature. This is a theme relevant to all sport events.



## Principle 2

### Restore and regenerate nature wherever possible

This principle focuses on actions to put back more than you have taken out. If there has been damage to natural features, this needs to be made good and better than before. Or an event could be an opportunity to improve the condition of a site or nearby area for nature.



## Principle 4

### Educate and inspire positive action for nature across and beyond sport

Your event is an opportunity to use your sport's profile and popularity to engage sizeable audiences – spectators and fans, workforce and participants (players and officials) and your wider network of suppliers, partners, media and host communities – to drive positive awareness and action for nature.



## Getting started

For those who have limited knowledge or experience of nature conservation issues, it can be daunting to know how to start addressing this subject. Rest assured, you do not have to be an expert – there is plenty of help available should you need it. What you can do is recognise

the importance of protecting nature and care enough to embrace it within the context of your sport event.

In this guide we take you through a series of key steps to help frame your approach and set you on the right path:

### 1- Knowing your venue

Whether choosing where to host your event, or using a pre-determined venue, you first need to understand its context in relation to the natural environment.

### 2- Planning your event

Making sure your event plans respect the nature conservation constraints and opportunities that have been identified.

### 3- Staging your event

Putting into practice the safeguards necessary to protect wild plants and animals nearby your venue and using the platform provided by the event to promote awareness and understanding of nature conservation.

### 4- What you leave behind

A legacy of improved or restored natural habitats, greater awareness and understanding of sport and nature, and a wealth of experience and knowledge to pass on to others for future events.

These four steps follow a sequence as illustrated in the next page.



# 1 Knowing your venue

Wikimedia Images





## Whether choosing where to host your event, or using a pre-determined venue, you first need to understand its context in relation to the natural environment

Many potential impacts on nature can be avoided at the earliest stage of event planning by choosing locations away from nature protected areas and fragile habitats. This opportunity is most likely to apply to sports that take place across open country, in mountains or along coasts, such as orienteering, motor rally, road cycling, triathlon, alpine sports, sailing and other water sports. However, even fixed sports venues can be in or close to important natural sites or features, so it is always wise to understand the broader environmental context before committing to a specific site, venue configuration or event concept.

### Have you chosen the venue/location for your event?

YES

NO

Use the following section to learn about its environmental context and understand what specific constraints and opportunities you need to consider

This is your chance to select the venue for your event in full knowledge of potential ecological issues, so you can minimise risks and avoid impacts on nature

My event isn't in one place (venue); it spans a wide area and/or multiple sites – use the guidance in this section and also go to Appendix 1 (Sport events beyond venues)

Avoiding and minimising impacts on nature is preferable to restoring or compensating for any damage caused, not just for the sake of natural habitats and species but also because the reputational, practical and financial costs of addressing negative impacts can be significant.



## How to understand your venue's significance for nature

### Using aerial photographs

One of the best and simplest ways to appreciate the natural context of your venue, is to look at satellite imagery from Google Maps. This is a visual way of seeing how your site fits into a local context of green spaces, water bodies and other natural features.

This is important because many sports facilities serve as connections between areas of wildlife habitat, or buffers between natural areas and developed areas, even if the actual venues have limited value for nature.

Remember, while individual sites may have limited intrinsic value for nature, when they form part of a larger, connected series of sites and green spaces, their collective value can be substantially greater than the individual parts. Therefore, always make the effort to understand how your event venue fits within a wider local context. This is particularly important in urban areas, where sports facilities often provide greenspace connections between other patches of greenspace or waterways, effectively creating a network of closely linked sites that cumulatively add a lot of value for nature.



1 Google Maps Screenshot of the HFC Bank Stadium in Suva, Fiji.



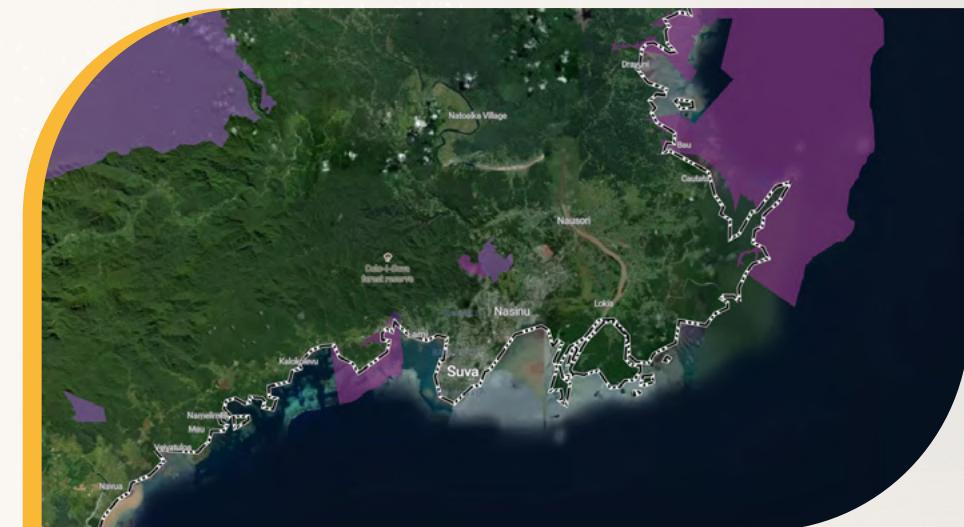
## Checking for protected areas

The next step should be to find out if there are any protected areas covering or close to the venue<sup>1</sup> you are thinking of using for your event. There are many different types and levels of protected area, which can be confusing. The following tools offer a useful basis for initial background research.



This is a rich resource, bringing together numerous ecology datasets. The terminology can be bewildering to non-experts but there are some simple steps you can take.

Zoom the map to the area you want to check. Under the dataset tab, scroll down and click on Terrestrial Protected Areas WDPA. This will highlight any protected areas in various shades of purple and there is a key to explain which category the colours represent. The same approach can be used for checking for Marine Protected Areas WDPA if relevant to your event.



2 Screenshot of UN Biodiversity Lab showing Protected Areas around Suva, Fiji

<sup>1</sup> We use the term venue here in a broad sense to cover any site or space to be used for a sport event



## Checking for protected and threatened species

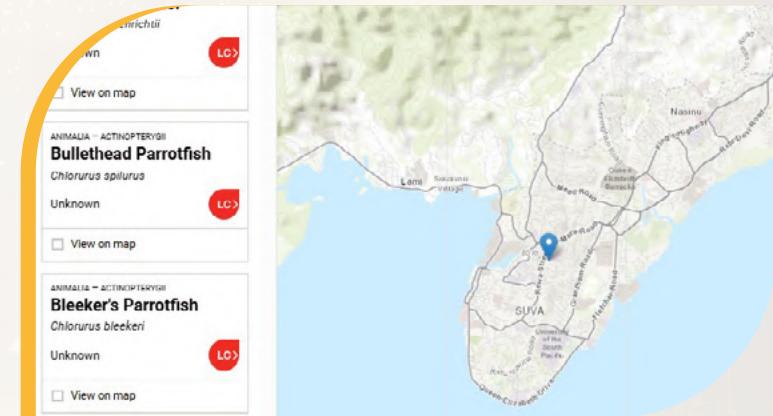
The IUCN Red List is a critical indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity. It provides information about range, population size, habitat and ecology, use and/or trade, threats, and conservation actions that will help inform necessary conservation decisions.



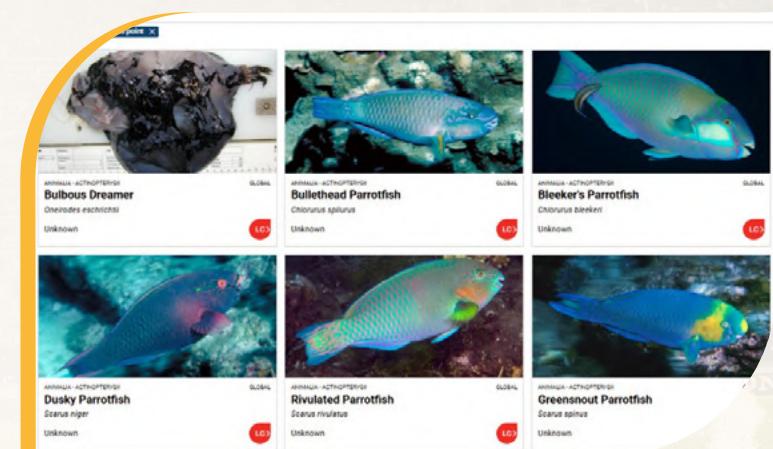
Zoom the map to the area you want to check. Add a location pin and you will receive information about the species in this area.

For a detailed step-by-step guide on how to assess your venue's significance for nature, access:

**Self-Assessment tool**  
**Sports for Nature Mapping your relationship with nature**



3 Screenshot of the IUCN Red List; Map View; Pinned location: IUCN Office in Suva, Fiji



4 Screenshot of the IUCN Red List; Grid View; Pinned location: IUCN Office in Suva, Fiji



## Local information sources - who to approach for help and how

Using a global dataset is a starting point but it may not give you sufficient definition of information at the scale you need to make an informed choice.

Every situation is different, so there is no single guaranteed way of finding the right experts to help you. If you have the budget to pay for consultants, that is an obvious starting point. Otherwise, a simple Google search for environmental organisations in your country, region or city should give you some initial leads.

Look for environmental organisations already working in your area. The IUCN Membership Directory is a helpful resource, bringing together more than 1,400 members worldwide — from government agencies and NGOs to indigenous peoples' organisations, universities, and even business associations. You can also explore the Contributions for Nature platform, an interactive global map that shows where IUCN Members are carrying out or planning conservation and restoration projects. Both tools make it easier to find potential partners and discover initiatives you can align with.

Of course, many of these entities have their own challenges in terms of resources and may not be in a position to give you direct help. Very often, though, it is a good starting point and they might refer you to another organisation, or someone who would be better placed to help.

Another angle is to look at your area from an eco-tourism perspective. Many cities have people who offer guided nature tours. These people will know the best places for nature and by extension are likely to understand the context of where your event will take place. Alternatively, search online for local birdwatching forums. If you simply search for "Birding + name of city/area" you can often get quite detailed information and worthwhile contacts to follow up. There are, of course, many different specialisms in the world of nature, but birders tend to be the most prominent and active,

and many have good knowledge of habitats, plants and other animal groups.

It might feel awkward asking a nature specialist to help you for free, but they might be attracted by some in-kind benefits, such as free tickets to the event. Quite often they will be interested to have the chance to look at a site they would not normally have access to.

In approaching any organisation or individual, it is important to be clear what you are asking for, on what basis and what – if anything – you can offer in return for their help. Explain about the event – its location, size, timing and duration, and why you are interested in information of natural environment aspects. Also explain the opportunity side of how your event could be a platform for promoting nature conservation to a wide audience.

### Possible sources of local help to investigate include:

- Regional IUCN offices
- National environmental protection agencies
- City authorities
- Voluntary environmental organisations
- Natural History museums
- University ecology departments
- Eco-tour guides
- Local nature/birding forums
- Your existing commercial partners – many large companies have their own sustainability teams
- Your members or supporters – are there any amateur naturalists among them?



## Assessing the information

As a general rule sports events should not be held in or close by nature protected areas<sup>2</sup> or where they might impact on threatened species. Of course, the scale, nature and timing of your event and the type of protected area, or species concerned, may mean that the level of risk to nature is minimal and it would be reasonable to proceed with the event on such a location. However, where there is likely to be a risk to fragile habitats and rare or threatened species, this should be a red flag – do not proceed.



<sup>2</sup> In this context we are referring to areas strictly protected for their natural value – key habitats and rare or threatened species. There are many other types of protected areas, for example those based on landscape or cultural heritage value, and some actively encourage sport and other recreational and tourism uses.

## Example situations

It is not always obvious when and where ecological impacts need to be considered. Here are some situations where a responsible and informed approach can make the difference between negative impact and a successful event.

- A coastal bay protected on account of large numbers of wintering waterfowl, might be suitable for summer sailing events, provided the event set up and operation do not cause any impact to the habitat and food sources that the wintering birds rely upon.
- A road race that passes through an ecologically rich area might not have any direct impact due to the sport itself, but spectators gathering along the route might cause significant damage to natural habitats through trampling and leaving litter.
- An indoor sport with no obvious impact on nature, but where the venue is located within or next to a protected area, could still cause disturbance through noise, lighting, parking and movement of vehicles and crowds in and out of the venue
- An outdoor sport event could damage habitats and disturb wildlife during the set up period – e.g. installing temporary infrastructure – rather than during the event itself. In these situations, scheduling of works is a critical factor.



There will be other situations where features of natural interest occur in or close to an event venue, but which do not have any formal protected status. In a local context, these features may have relatively high value for wildlife and there may be strong advocates in the local community for safeguarding such areas. This can be especially true in urban environments, where patches of greenspace can hold special value to local people, even if in a strictly technical sense, their ecological importance is limited.

Wildlife does not always inhabit pristine natural habitats. Quite often, rare and threatened species can occur alongside human-made environments, including sports venues. Sometimes, therefore, you may have to adjust plans to accommodate a protected animal or bird inhabiting your site. In many countries this is a legal requirement.

At venues where the same types of event are held regularly, do not assume all is clear regarding nature conservation issues. It is possible they may previously have gone unnoticed, or recent changes in or near the site may have altered the ecological context. Therefore, it is always wise to check for any nature related issues before getting into detailed planning of the event.

Sports for Nature has produced two online tools that pull together the various sources of information available and guide you through the process of evaluating the natural context of your site and local area.



**Baseline assessment worksheet**



**On-site survey checklist**



Female blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), a migratory species, at an outside dining area for the NEOM Beach Games, November 2024 in Saudi Arabia.

## Migration routes

Some parts of the world are known for being bird migration flyways, where vast numbers of birds move between breeding and wintering grounds. The flyways typically follow major geographical features like coastlines, mountain ranges, and rivers. It is typical for birds to stop off on their route, quite often in places that are very different to their normal habitats. Sports fields and landscaped areas around sports venues can often host surprising numbers and varieties of migrating birds. Therefore, even where your event site may have limited day-to-day ecological value, at migration time, it can suddenly become an important stop over for birds.



## Summary of key steps

The key to selecting or confirming a suitable event venue or location, is to follow a careful path of due diligence that will guide your choice.

- Check whether your event would take place on or close by a nature protected area
- Check for evidence of protected species being present where you plan to hold the event
- Note whether there are any natural features such as water courses, trees, grasslands, dunes within or adjacent to where your event will take place
- Consult relevant environmental authorities, local experts and NGOs to determine issues, risks and opportunities from their perspective
- Consult with public authorities to see if there are any other environmental regulatory requirements to be considered



If the result of any of the above indicates some risk to nature, consider what steps you can take to avoid impacts. Potential options could include:

- Choosing an alternative site or venue
- Conducting more detailed surveys\* – to understand the year-round ecological context of the venue and local area
- Scaling the event to what the venue can reasonably accommodate
- Modifying the timing of the event – to ensure event delivery phases avoid peak periods when wildlife is most prone to disturbance, such as breeding, nesting or moulting seasons
- Changing configuration of spaces and access routes within the venue – to manage disturbance away from fragile natural areas
- Reviewing management practices to avoid harm to nature
- Proactively managing parts of the site to improve their value for nature

### \* Note

This is a potentially expensive and time-consuming exercise requiring professional expertise. If you need to go down this route, it may render the event unviable. However, for venues that regularly hold sports events, building up an inventory of wildlife inhabiting the sites and their surrounds can be a valuable exercise for their long-term use as an event hosting venue.

# 2 Planning your event with nature in mind





## Making sure your event plans respect the nature conservation constraints and opportunities that have been identified

The event planning stage is where decisions are made on what goes where, who does what and when. It is the time when size, quantities and spatial layout configurations are decided. For the vast majority of sports events held at regular venues, the primary environmental issues are likely to be related to energy, waste, transport, logistics and catering, rather than nature-related concerns, but this must not be assumed without appropriate due diligence.

Where nature conservation is a significant consideration there are six priorities for the planning phase:

- To ensure the information already gathered on natural habitats and key species is factored into the event planning
- Complete any further ecological investigations in a timely manner to fill out any gaps in information and/or to meet statutory requirements, so the results can be fed into the event planning process
- Define roles and responsibilities in relation to dealing with nature conservation issues and ensure relevant managers and other workforce receive appropriate training
- Bring partner organisations and experts into the process
- Agree specific environmental safeguards to be put in place for the event period
- Confirm opportunities for positive campaigns and initiatives to promote nature conservation linked to the event\*



### Note

The latter point could be applied to any sport event, as it does not rely on site-specific matters and could be focused on outreach initiatives and promotional activities. However, where there are specific nature-related features connected with the event, this presents opportunities for more focused conservation initiatives that have greater relevance and meaning to the target audience.



## Understanding your venue

Once the venue, site or race route have been chosen and the challenge is now to ensure nature is protected as best possible and there is no lasting damage caused by the event.

Every good event manager will say to their team: "Know your venue." This mantra aims to ensure that all those working on an event know where everything is, who does what and how it all fits together.

We can apply the same approach to nature:

- Draw or mark up a map noting where there are any natural features that could be affected by the event
- Note what is planned to happen in or near those areas – e.g. field of play, spectator areas, event service compounds, car parking etc.
- Match these activities against potential impacts on nature (see section below on evaluating impact risks)
- Consider what can be changed, or done to ensure these areas are not impacted by the event (see section on venue design and layout)
- Identify specialists who can advise, monitor and possibly provide training – these may be internal, or via external partners, NGOs or public authorities (see section on the Green team)
- Identify who will be working in those areas and ensure everyone responsible is aware – ensure relevant workforce are fully briefed about the nature protection requirements and provide them with contacts to call in case of need for extra support. (see section on training)



© World Triathlon



## Evaluating impact risks

Taking account of the scale, nature and timing of your proposed event, what types of impact on nature might your event cause?

Type of impact	Level of risk			Example
	High	Medium	Low	
Physical damage to natural features				Installation of event infrastructure (e.g. temporary stands, barriers, trackways, spectator service areas, logistics compounds, parking areas...) Broadcasting requirements (cutting or removal of trees and bushes to improve camera views) Field of play extensions
Trampling of natural vegetation				Spectators moving to/from viewing points
Soil compaction or erosion				Vehicle and foot traffic over weak ground, parking and storing materials
Disturbance to wildlife				Noise, light pollution or general activity too close to sensitive areas
Water abstraction				Irrigating playing surfaces during periods of drought – necessary for the sport but controversial in eyes of public
Wildfires				Events in fire-prone environments
Pollution of water courses or ground water				Spillages, poorly managed waste disposal
Littering natural areas				Poor waste management practices Releases of balloons, Chinese Lanterns
Introduction of non-native species				Poor biosecurity protocols for imported boats and landscaping materials
Impacts through the supply chain				Sourcing goods that have been produced in an environmentally damaging way
High carbon emissions				Usually due to impacts of travel – flights, car use to access venue...



Rating potential risks on a high-medium-low basis is inevitably subjective and imprecise, but it is a simple way of highlighting priority issues that need to be addressed in more detail. Based on the steps outline in the previous chapter, where any category is rated high risk, you will need to investigate further and develop an action plan to avoid, minimise and mitigate the risk. Medium level risks should be checked on a regular basis to ensure their status hasn't risen to high level.

The following template sets out the main points to be considered when planning to address any high level risk to nature that has been identified for your event. At a simple level, just fill in the blank cells as a questionnaire. For events with a more structured management system, use this checklist of points as a guide and integrate them into your specific event documentation format.

Fundamentally, this approach is to ensure all significant risks have been assessed, management options and resource implications considered, and senior management has approved the course of action proposed.

Action plan template for managing high level risks to nature	
Description of the risk to nature	
What is causing it?	
How does this affect the event?	
Are there any legal or reputational implications?	
Are any external organisations or experts involved, or need to be contacted? (provide contact details)	
Options to avoid, reduce or mitigate the risk*	
Recommended solution	
Who will be responsible?	
Which functions are affected?	
Cost and resource implications (financial and people)	
Timescale	
How will we know it is successful?	
Is there a communications plan for (a) in event of media enquiries, (b) to report on what we have done?	
Approved by senior management:	
Name	
Position	
Date	

\* These may include provision for longer-term habitat restoration initiatives, which if required will need to be planned for well in advance (see Chapter 4, After the Event).



Even if all the risk areas appear low, some issues may still arise and you need to be prepared. Although unlikely, wild animals and birds can turn up and get trapped inside a venue, or injured wildlife may be found within the venue during the event (see Section 3, Animal welfare issues, page 36).

You might unexpectedly receive complaints or allegations linked to a nature conservation issue and whatever the merits of the case, it needs to be handled carefully.

Perhaps the most likely situation is a late change of plan that has been ordered by senior figure without regard to the environmental consequences. Such eventualities are typically wasteful, undoing what has been planned, involving more cost and materials, and might mean increased impact on nature. They are hard to anticipate and difficult to manage at short notice but as part of your preparations, you should run scenarios of possible unplanned or late changes to see what responses could be applied.



Onerugbyphotos.com



## Venue design and layout

Having identified the main potential risks and impacts to nature from your event, now is the stage to reflect these aspects in the design and layout of the venue. In terms of potential physical impact on nature, the design process is the critical part of matching event requirements with ecological parameters. The main considerations for nature during this stage will most likely focus on:

- Ensuring event infrastructure is not sited in sensitive natural areas or likely to affect nearby sensitive habitats such as wetlands.
- Ensuring that construction logistics (e.g. haulage routes, tracks, cable laying, equipment storage and spoil heaps) do not impact on sensitive natural areas.
- Ensuring spectator routes, viewing areas and crowd flows do not impact on ecologically sensitive areas (within the venue and along access routes to/from the venue).
- Ensuring adequate safeguards are put in place to minimise the risk of pollution through leaks and spillages.
- Planning systems for lighting and sound to limit peripheral impact beyond the field-of-play and spectator areas.
- Optimising the size and space of event overlay to minimise the amount of land and materials used.
- Reviewing potential impacts of off-site facilities related to the event – e.g. training grounds, live sites, transport and logistic depots.

If your event plans are already quite advanced, consider what can be changed, or done to ensure nature areas are not impacted by the event – e.g. reconfigure the venue layout so that high risk activities are moved away from nature areas, install temporary barriers or create buffer zones around certain natural features, even review timing and scale of the event.





## The 'green team'

Your best insurance for managing risks and issues and to have meaningful input to planning of event infrastructure and operations, is to nominate a 'green team' for your event. Whether professional, voluntary or a combination, it is important to nominate people responsible for overseeing how your event handles nature conservation aspects and ensure they are closely involved in planning the event.

In this phase it is important to identify who will be responsible for looking after environmental issues. Larger events and organisations may well have a professional expert appointed, either on the staff or as a consultant. Smaller events and organisations will have to rely on finding someone with knowledge and interest in this subject from among existing staff or volunteers (see list of possible sources of help in section "Local information sources", page 16). At whatever scale, somebody need to be responsible for coordinating the environmental dossier.

Environment is a broad topic and even where there is a professional environment manager on the event team, they might not have sufficient knowledge of ecology, so additional external help may be needed.

Depending on the scale and nature of the event, this core 'green team' may be expanded to have representatives based in other event functions and also draw in relevant external specialists, such as from environmental NGOs, natural history museums, or individual experts.

### Key tasks

- Ensure venue design and layout respects the ecological and regulatory constraints identified previously
- Be involved in the procurement process to include environmental requirements in tender specifications and review bids
- Develop environmental training modules for event workforce
- Build partnerships with local NGOs, public authorities and/or commercial sponsors with a view to developing active programmes to promote nature conservation
- Be on hand to monitor application of environmental measures and to assess and advice on incidents and issues that may arise during the event
- Support the Communications team in telling the story on how the event has championed nature



## Training - preparation

Wherever possible, it is important to provide training for all those working on the event, whether as paid staff, contractors or volunteers. For large events there should be a module on environmental management, which would typically cover:

- The venue's features of natural interest (habitats, individual trees, water courses, key species)
- Location of drains sea where they drain to
- Places on the site that are vulnerable to erosion or soil compaction
- Understanding the environmental risks involved in operating the venue and staging an event
  - ◆ General overview
  - ◆ Function-specific risks
- Measures to be undertaken to protect natural features during the event
- Pollution prevention protocols
- Incident management (observing, reporting, acting)

For small scale events, where many of the workforce may just attend on the day, function managers should be prepared to provide verbal briefings on any key environmental aspects they need to be aware of, and hand out simple fact sheets of key points and who to contact if anything seems wrong.



Thi Truong Giang/giengs.com



## Sustainable sourcing

### This section relates to Principle 3 of the Sports for Nature Framework: Nature in your supply chains.

All sport events will involve buying some goods and services. Certain categories of goods have a production and transportation impact that makes them potentially harmful for nature.

Food and beverage for event catering is the most obvious link to nature, due to how crops are grown, livestock reared and fish and seafood harvested. This is irrespective of the type of sport, or the venue where it is held.

Two other product types commonly used in events that have potential impacts on nature are timber (typically for event overlay installation) and cotton (used in clothing). Additionally, consider cleaning products and other chemicals that could potentially create contamination of the environment.

One particular area of concern for nature conservation is the use of "Forest Risk Commodities." These are agricultural products whose production is linked to deforestation and forest degradation. These commodities, such as beef, cocoa, palm oil, and soy, are often produced on land converted from forests, contributing to global deforestation. For the most part they occur in industrial scale food processing and less of a risk for small-scale locally based catering using fresh and seasonal products. However, it is good practice to make it clear to your catering providers to avoid sourcing products linked to deforestation. Even if the risk for your event is low, this approach helps spread awareness across the wider event catering supply chain.

#### Actions to take

- As early as possible in the event planning stage, establish a sustainable sourcing policy that sets out the key requirements your suppliers should fulfil<sup>3</sup>
- Communicate this to your supply chain:
  - As part of the tendering process for new suppliers
  - Through dialogue with existing contracted suppliers
- Make clear to suppliers and those bidding to be suppliers, what specific standards you seek – e.g. local origin, seasonality, 'eco-friendly', product certification, chain of custody – and how you will evaluate their responses
- Ensure your requirements are carried through into contracts and state what remedies or penalties would be invoked for non-compliance
- Include requirements for packaging, managing waste and return or onward reuse/disposal of materials – this is to avoid harmful materials getting into the wider environment
- Monitor implementation and give feedback to your suppliers on how well they have applied the criteria
- Include a review of the sourcing process as part of the post-event wrap up and reporting

3 Sustainable Sourcing policies and related requirements would typically apply to all types of supplies of goods and services for your event. Here we are focusing on the most relevant aspects for minimising impacts on nature.

# 3 Protecting nature during a sport event





## Putting into practice the environmental safeguards necessary to protect wild plants and animals in or nearby your venue

Here we consider the event period, which spans from installing all the equipment and infrastructure before the event, the live event and the post-event dismantling of temporary structures and removal off-site. These are the active periods when impacts on nature can occur.

If the previous guidance on site selection, venue investigations and event planning have been followed, the majority of potential impacts on nature should have been anticipated and avoidance measures will already be in place. That's the theory.

In practice, the event period is a frenetic time, often with multiple contractors involved in the set up and then large numbers of participants coming to the venue for the actual event – workforce, athletes, officials, media, spectators, guests and partners. It is very easy amongst all this activity to lose track of previous plans. Added to this may be late changes to schedules or other elements of the event, weather impacts and a workforce that hasn't been fully briefed on environmental aspects. The organisers' priority is to keep the show on the road and late decisions and changes may be made that haven't factored in the various conservation safeguards that had been planned.

It always happens like this and whoever is leading on the environmental management side of the event operation, needs to anticipate such risks and issues, have mitigation plans in place and be flexible enough to respond to incidents as they arise.

The more that environmental criteria are integrated into event planning and delivery the better. For example when doing readiness checks across all aspects of the venue and event operations, include key environmental points, rather than keeping them separate.





## Installing and taking down overlay

This covers all the temporary infrastructure required for the event, such as stands, barriers, trackway, tents, marquees, cabins, toilets, signage, catering and retail facilities, podia, lighting, public address systems, video screens, cabling and wiring, camera stands, generators etc. It is by far the riskiest period both from a health and safety and environmental perspective.

The build period is often quite long, weeks if not months, meaning potential extended disturbance to wildlife. The take down is always a much shorter period but rarely as well supervised and many mistakes can be made in the rush to get equipment and materials offsite.

### Actions to take\*

- Ensure all contractors authorised to come onsite have been briefed on any specific environmental requirements and they follow well marked, designated routes to and from where they will be working
- Regularly patrol the site to verify that all natural features you are safeguarding remain intact and undisturbed. Any infringements should be reported immediately to site manager and the contractor involved
- Ensure any temporary power generators and refuelling facilities are not placed close to water courses and drains, are adequately bunded and spill kits provided
- Avoid heavy vehicles and stockpiles of equipment being placed over tree roots, or in areas where there is high risk of soil compaction or erosion



### \* Note

These are all points that should have been defined in the planning phase. However, plans do not always translate into reality on the ground and changes may happen or be required. The environment team needs to be alert to such situations and be involved in agreeing alterations to plans.



## Lighting and sound

Temporary lighting across outdoor sites that are normally unlit can affect nocturnal wildlife such as bats, moths and roosting birds.

It is also common for events to have loud sound systems for commentary, announcements and playing music. It is part of creating an entertainment atmosphere. However, like with lighting, this can be disturbing to wildlife, especially on sites that are not regular venues for this type of event.

### Actions to take

- Outdoor lighting should minimise light-spread across natural features and be focused on its intended purposes of field-of-play illumination, wayfinding and security
- Where possible use warm lighting from red end of spectrum as this is least disturbing to wildlife
- Other than for security purposes, outdoor lighting should be switched off outside of event time.
- Illumination of natural features for aesthetic purposes – rock faces, individual trees or water bodies – should be avoided, or only undertaken after careful surveys to ensure disturbance to wildlife is minimised
- Sound systems should be directed away from sensitive natural areas and noise monitoring checks should be undertaken





## Protecting natural features

Generally, access control protocols at sport events will ensure people are kept to designated areas of the venue. However, where the sport takes place across large sites within a natural setting – such as golf, equestrian cross-country or mountain biking – additional measures may be needed to prevent large numbers of spectators straying onto ‘no-go’ areas and trampling natural vegetation (see Appendix 1).

In these situations the length of barrier fencing required may be prohibitively expensive, but simple post and rope solutions with some keep out notices are likely to be inadequate.

In the excitement of the event, spectators will want to get close to the action and weak barriers without stewards are easily breached. It is also important to anticipate unofficial cut throughs across natural areas, where people want to get to vantage points as quickly as possible. Once breached it is very difficult to stop.

In hot conditions, people will seek out shade, which may mean they penetrate into wooded areas or congregate under trees that are supposed to be protected.

Occasionally, off-duty staff and volunteers have been known to take advantage of their accreditation to enter protected areas to get a better view of the sport action. This can undermine the rationale for keeping spectators out and must be avoided.

### Actions to take

- Clearly mark out and delineate ‘no go’ areas
- Use barriers or fencing appropriate to the situation
- Supplement with signage explaining reason for keeping out of these areas
- Allocate sufficient volunteers and stewards to patrol these areas and guide spectators along correct paths
- Include protected areas on site maps
- Use public address announcements to remind people to keep to designated paths and viewing areas
- Ensure there is ample provision of shade and drinking water within spectator areas
- Work out a protocol for dealing with situations when barriers are breached
- Ensure all workforce personnel are informed about nature areas within the venue and the need to respect them
- As part of the waste management and cleaning programme, carry out regular checks of outer and green parts of the venue to clear away any litter so there is no accumulation
- Establish a protocol for use of drones so they keep to agreed flight paths and do not pass over or close to sensitive nature areas



## Ceremonies and spectaculars

These are essential parts of the entertainment value of many events. They will be bright and loud but for a short duration. However, if repeated over several days, disturbance of wildlife could be a material concern. Where held outdoors, take note of the following points:

- Avoid release of balloons and Chinese lanterns – this is effectively uncontrolled littering of the wider area and can be dangerous to livestock and wild animals that may ingest deflated balloons, while the lanterns also pose potential fire risk.
- Challenge the need for firework displays as these can cause significant disturbance to wildlife, livestock and pets. Alternatives, such as laser light shows may be less impactful.
- Challenge need for giveaways and handouts that are likely to add to littering
- For nighttime events, ensure access routes are clearly marked and stewards are on hand to direct people, so that crowds don't stray onto areas that are supposed to be protected.





## Animal welfare issues

Sometimes, wild animals can become trapped inside a sports venue. They may be injured, or sick, or simply unable to escape and have become distressed. Presence of large numbers of people will also add to their stress. In these situations, it is important to get expert help to come on site as soon as possible. The venue manager should have a contact number for local animal rescue specialists, identified and alerted in advance so that someone is on call in case of incidents.

Trapped wild animals can be dangerous and should not be handled by inexperienced or unqualified people, unless it is clearly a time-critical emergency for the animal concerned. The best action is to secure the area as best possible, move people away calmly and quietly and wait for specialist help to arrive.

There are also occasions when potentially dangerous animals (e.g. bears, crocodiles, snakes) enter a venue or are found along a race route and could pose a threat to spectators, workforce or athletes. There are even some bird species that are known to divebomb unsuspecting people if they come too close to the bird's territory! Occasionally, some events may experience infestations or swarms of insects that create nuisance for people at the event. As always, seek expert help and be prepared to know who to call in such situations. Do not try to intervene directly without proper guidance.

Thankfully, such issues with wildlife are rare, and most of the time the presence of wildlife adds to the natural quality and experience of the event. But for the smooth running of your event, for the sake of animal welfare and reputational reasons, always be prepared.

### Actions to take

- Make sure you know what you are dealing with – species identification is important, as some may be protected and require special licenses to trap or handle
- Prepare a protocol for managing incidents involving trapped or injured animals
- Prepare a protocol for dealing with infestations or dangerous animals on the venue
- Have a vet and other relevant experts on call in case of emergencies
- Minimise the number of people in the vicinity to avoid additional stress to the animal(s) affected
- Be prepared to answer media and public questions on such incidents



## Training - delivery

While training modules would be prepared during the event planning phase, their execution will usually be close to or as part of the event delivery phase. It is important for everyone to have an overall orientation training, which should include a high level overview of environmental aspects. Job specific training will focus in on particular elements that are relevant to where people are working and their role.

For contractors, where many of the workforce may just attend on the day, function managers must ensure they brief all newly arrived personnel on environmental do's and don'ts relevant to their work area. It is helpful to provide posters in staff break areas and simple fact sheets of key points and who to contact if anything seems wrong. This is particularly important for those working as event stewards and those responsible for access control.



Photo: M. Mungarapati

## Dealing with incidents

When something goes wrong, what do you do? This is an often overlooked aspect of event management, especially in relation to environmental issues. Typical, this is because those responsible for environmental matters are not formally part of the functional and communication structure of the venue operation.

Therefore, during the event planning stage, incident management protocols should be devised and these should include potential environmental cases.

### Actions to take

- Evaluate – assess the severity of the incident and what actions need to be taken
- Inform – know who to notify according to pre-agreed protocol
- Escalate – if too complex to manage on the spot, or requiring external assistance, escalate the incident to the Venue General Manager or equivalent

As a general rule, incidents should be managed and resolved as swiftly as possible on the spot. It is only in complex or dangerous situations that wider involvement should be required.



## Promoting nature conservation

### This section relates to Principle 4 of the Sports for Nature Framework: Positive action for nature across and beyond sport.

Sports events offer a special opportunity to highlight nature conservation issues and to demonstrate good practice to a large and receptive audience. Where you can involve high profile athletes, the media and commercial partners, the positive impact can be far-reaching.

While this is in many respects the most engaging and exciting part of delivering the Sports for Nature principles, it has to be grounded in credibility, based on good practice demonstrated in the planning and delivery of the event. Communicating on positive environmental messages is only effective if you are seen to have “walked the talk.”

There are so many options to explore to communicate and engage on this theme and it will very much depend on your event context. It is also important to plan these well ahead of time. Here are some practical tips on things to consider:

- Information and signage – through all event communication channels, inform people about special natural attributes of the event venue and location, key actions you have done to conserve nature, highlight dos and don’ts (e.g. avoid littering, keep out of fenced areas where indicated, don’t light fires) with explanations as to why, and give a call to action (take-away ideas to help spread action for nature)
- Give media, including broadcasters, talking points on nature conservation – e.g. things you have done to protect nature, key points on rare species or the richness of wildlife in your area, initiatives with local partners, schools etc.

- Mascots and hero species can be powerful symbols with which to build campaigns and galvanise wider action
- Include nature elements within ceremonies and celebrations
- Seek special endorsements from sport stars competing at the event, or recent former athletes
- For larger events and those held regularly at the same venue or location, consider developing educational projects in partnership with local nature conservation organisations and/or event sponsors
- Use the event as a launch pad for signing up to special campaigns. These are usually best focused on local/regional initiatives that are most relevant to your audience, but consider also more global campaigns such as Clean Seas, Sports for Nature or the Olympic Forest Network
- Use the event to promote your membership of Sports for Nature (if applicable) to encourage others to sign up





## Risks to note

Ecology is a complex topic and it is very easy to make unwitting mistakes that can undermine your good work. Typical examples are mixing up species names, using the wrong pictures and not fact-checking sufficiently. It is always wise to have a knowledgeable ecologist or naturalist available to sense check your communications and guide use of correct pictures. It is embarrassing when you highlight a story on a particular bird, animal or plant and a picture editor uses an image of something completely different – and this happens a lot.

If you are considering nature-based projects as a way of promoting a positive message about what your event is enabling, do make sure they can be sustained long after the event is over. Tree planting projects are popular ways of showing care for the environment and engaging people. However, without ongoing management, the planted trees may not survive and this can become negative publicity that could undermine your current and future events.

### Example of nearly getting it wrong

At the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000, organisers thought it would be a nice way to promote the 'Green Games' initiative by giving all athletes a special thank you card impregnated with Eucalyptus seeds for them to take home and grow on. This idea was abandoned when it was pointed out that Eucalyptus is widely regarded as an invasive pest species outside its native Australia and would therefore be an inappropriate gift.

Summary of key elements for successful environmental campaigns:



#### Clear and impactful messaging

Communicate the urgency and importance of nature conservation issues



#### Innovative approaches

Utilise creative strategies like visual storytelling, interactive experiences, and community engagement



#### Community mobilisation

Empower people to act and participate in solutions



#### Focus on solutions

Highlight practical steps individuals and communities can take



#### Collaboration and partnerships

Build collaboration between local organisations, your partners and key individuals



## Measuring performance

It is important to keep track of progress and this is often done by setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Admittedly, this is difficult in the context of events, as nature-related initiatives usually take a longer timescale to produce measurable results. It is additionally difficult given that many ecological metrics will be affected by influences beyond those of your event.

Events that are being managed in an environmentally responsible way, will normally have a suite of measures across energy and water consumption, waste, travel and materials. While these are not specifically nature-related, they give a proxy indication of attention to environmental protection.

Specifically for nature, it is best to concentrate on impact avoidance measures across event operations, which can be both qualitative and quantitative. Alongside this, you may be able to capture some positive measures related to fan engagement for your awareness raising initiatives.

Specific circumstances of the type, duration and location of your event will determine the most appropriate measures, but some general measures are listed below to give some guidance.

### Impact avoidance KPIs

- Number of reportable incidents logged during the event that involved wildlife, pest control or animal welfare issues
- Number of leaks or spillages that escaped into surrounding environment
- Size of areas set aside for nature protection during the event (e.g. buffer strips, no go areas)
- Protective measures installed during the event (e.g. length of protective fencing, no of signs, spill kits etc.)
- Proportion of vegetarian/plant-based meals served
- Number of environmental checks carried out during the event
- Amount of environmental training given (hours and no of recipients)
- Number of hours external lighting switched on and loud sound systems used

### Awareness raising KPIs

- Number of views/likes/comments on social media posts about nature-related initiatives linked to the event
- Number of nature-specific stories issued
- Number of engagements with nature specialists or organisations
- Feedback responses within event satisfaction surveys

# 4 After the event





**Achieving a legacy of improved or restored natural habitats, greater awareness and understanding of sport and nature, and a wealth of experience and knowledge to pass on to other for future events.**

## Applying Principle 2: Restoring and regenerating nature

This principle can be invoked in two ways. First there is the reinstatement of or compensation for any natural features that have been damaged by the event. Often these can be regulatory requirements and may also have significant public relations issues too, so should not be underestimated. This is a potentially costly situation, which is always best avoided by not damaging natural features in the first place – following the principles of Zero Harm and Leave no Trace.

The second angle is to seize opportunities to improve the nature conservation value of areas that were already in poor condition prior to the event. For example, you may find areas of degraded land, litter, polluted waterways or patches of invasive non-native species within or adjacent to your venue. Pro-active measures to improve these situations would be a positive step, but needs to be planned carefully to avoid open-ended, long-term commitments that cannot be met.

Good quality nature restoration can take a considerable amount of time to have the desired effect and will usually require continual management, which adds to cost. Given that most events are over when the last marquee is taken down and packed away, and the organisers have

moved on, it is important to agree well in advance (i.e. early in the event planning stage) who will be responsible for ongoing nature conservation management and how it will be funded. This is where partnership working with venue owners, local environmental groups and public authorities – and possibly commercial partners – will be essential.

Sport events are also good vehicles for some one-off initiatives, such as beach and river cleans, litter picking and removal of graffiti, where you can mobilise volunteers, bring organisations together for a day and even involve athletes in the activities. However, even these have limited impact unless there is a series of follow up actions. Other popular initiatives such as planting trees or erecting nest boxes, need follow through to maintain them, so should not be done as one-off, isolated actions.





## Key steps

- Carry out a post-event condition assessment of the venue to verify whether there has been any impact on nature – e.g. trampled or damaged vegetation, eroded areas, litter, pollution of water bodies
- Based on the condition assessment, devise an action plan to make good any damage done\*
- Confirm time scale for restoration works, along with budget and responsibilities
- Identify and secure partner body to lead the project
- Ascertain if there is any external authority that will have to approve completion of the restoration works
- Approve the resources to support the programme for its duration



### Note

In situations where the objective is to improve the value of an area for nature that has not been impacted by the staging of the event, you can follow the same steps, but rather than damage mitigation, the focus is on ecological enhancement.

## Reporting

It is good practice to have an event debrief to capture achievements, challenges and lessons learned. For events that span several days, there should be daily internal debriefs for each of the operational functions. The environmental aspects should also be fed into these processes.

Larger events are likely to have formally structured post-event reports. These should include a section on environmental sustainability, including references to nature conservation aspects. These will form valuable case studies and should be provided to the Sports for Nature secretariat to enable the creation of a global best practice and knowledge transfer resource.

Formal reports will normally be written for an audience of event organisers, venue owners, public authorities, commercial partners, sports organisations and environmental organisations. While they should be publicly available, their focus is not for fan engagement. That purpose is best served during the build-up to the event and competition time, via news stories, social media posts, online information and on-site messaging.



# Appendix 1: Sport events beyond venues

Sports like road cycling, triathlon, rallying, orienteering, equestrian, cross-country running, cross-country skiing, biathlon and marathons take place along routes that extend considerable distances beyond the start-finish areas of the core venue. Likewise, the various disciplines of sailing and some other water-based sports use natural environments well beyond the limits of formal venues.

A typical sport event venue has defined boundaries with access control points. This means you can determine the numbers of people entering the venue as well as the amounts and types of materials. Think of this as a 'closed venue'.

In contrast, 'open venues' are places where an event passes through but where there is no, or very limited access control and minimal, if any, infrastructure for spectators. Very often these are unticketed areas, meaning there is no idea of how many spectators will attend and usually no transport services provided, so people arrive by their own means. Catering is typically ad hoc, either with street vendors or people bring their own food and drink.

Many of these types of event are marketed on the quality of the landscape they pass through. However, for nature there is potentially greater risk, as these events cover larger areas than a standard venue and could potentially pass through, or very close to nature protected areas and other fragile habitats. While the passage of the event might be quite short – say a few hours – the potential disturbance to nature can be significant.



## Biodiversity and rallying

Excerpt from [World Rally Championship Promoter Sustainability Roadbook](#)

"At its core, our sport thrives in breathtaking yet demanding natural settings. The delicate balance between ruggedness and beauty defines rallying's appeal. Preserving the natural environment and biodiversity isn't just desirable; it's integral to safeguarding our sport's unique essence.

Following the Sports for Nature Framework, we aspire to create a nature-positive future, halting and reversing nature loss. Our promoters will measure rallying's impact on nature and biodiversity, assess mitigation, conservation and restoration measures, and report progress in accordance with international standards and roadmaps."



Additionally, events with outside broadcast involving helicopters and drones, need to consider the disturbance effect both on people and wildlife. Sometimes broadcasters require vegetation to be cut back for better camera views, including overhanging tree cover along roads so they can get direct vertical aerial views of the race. It is hard for the event organisers to resist these calls given the status and financial muscle of broadcasters, but this impact must be weighed to balance long-term environmental damage against temporary facilitation of broadcasting an event.

Off-road events present particular concerns for nature, simply due to the event taking place across tracts of open country. The race route map be designed to avoid ecologically sensitive places but it is hard to control the wider impact of other vehicles and people tracking the event.

Marine and coastal sports need to consider where spectators can view the event. Clifftops and dune systems can provide great viewing points but they are also fragile environments and can be damage by heavy trampling during an event. In these situations, the spectators may be some distance from the field of play, so organisers need to assess ecological impacts across a wider area than for most other sports.

## Key impacts to address

- Uncontrolled access along race route may damage natural habitats, disturb wildlife and cause erosion
- Widespread littering
- Increased fire risk from campfires, barbeques, smoking

## Management considerations

- More complex ecological evaluation due to geographical scale of event
- Increased provision of fencing, stewarding, signage and information material
- Management logistics to oversee and coordinate across multiple locations
- Potentially significant remedial works required to restore damaged areas
- Ensuring budget provision for each of the above



## Appendix 2: Sports events in mountain areas

Mountain environments are incredibly fragile and sensitive to disturbance, which means they can suffer disproportionately high impacts from sporting activities. For example, not only is there the direct footprint of ski-runs, but the use of additives in snowmaking can potentially impact natural ecosystems downstream through snow-melt run-off into the head of water catchments. Due to gradients of the natural topography, soil erosion and rock falls can be significant risks.

Winter sport events in snowclad mountains may not at first sight pose any risk to wildlife, as most – although not all – birds and animals migrate to lower altitudes. However, there are potential impacts from compacting or eroding the underlying soil and vegetation, that in turn affects the natural flora and fauna in spring and summer seasons. It is therefore important for organisers of mountain sport events to consider off-season impacts, alongside any direct measures for the event period itself.

In mountain areas the high variations in the number of people at a particular location may make the functioning of basic infrastructure very challenging (going from a few hundred inhabitants to several thousand generates big challenges for managing access, logistics and waste treatment, which in turn can put further strains on nature in these areas. The proposed venue and host community must be capable of accommodating the nature and scale of the sports event planned and this needs to be assessed as part of the venue selection process.

Overall, sports events in mountain areas are likely to require more intensive ecological studies and impact assessments than their lowland counterparts and this needs to be factored into event planning and budgeting.

### Key impacts to address

- Snowmelt containing additives entering natural water courses
- Impacts of snowmaking systems on local water availability and hydrology
- Control of erosion and soil compaction
- Off-season impacts on flora and fauna

### Management considerations

- More complex ecological evaluation due to fragile nature of mountain environments
- Management logistics in remote areas
- Potentially significant remedial works required to restore damaged areas
- Ensuring budget provision for each of the above

## Published by

Sports for Nature

## Date

December 2025

## Lead author

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## Graphic design

Blueverde Studio

## Acknowledgements

The following stakeholder groups contributed to the guide by reviewing it and providing valuable input and suggestions: Sports for Nature Framework Signatories and Sports for Nature Partners.

## About Sports for Nature

Sports for Nature is a joint initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Olympic Committee (IOC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Dona Bertarelli Philanthropy.

It aims to deliver transformative action for nature through sports, by 2030 and beyond, enabling sports to champion nature and contribute to its protection and restoration. It provides a game plan for sports – at all levels – to accelerate and inspire others to take action for nature.

### Founding partners



International  
Olympic  
Committee



Convention on  
Biological Diversity





## Join the Sports for Nature community

By committing to the Sports for Nature Framework, sport organisations join a community dedicated to leveraging sports towards the protection and restoration of nature. Contact the Sports for Nature team to learn more about the Framework and discuss how you can get involved.

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