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Opinion

Novel ecosystems: implications for conservation and restoration

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Many ecosystems are rapidly being transformed into new, non-historical configurations owing to a variety of local and global changes. We discuss how new systems can arise in the face of primarily biotic change (extinction and/or invasion), primarily abiotic change (e.g. land use or climate change) and a combination of both. Some changes will result in hybrid systems retaining some original characteristics as well as novel elements, whereas larger changes will result in novel systems, which comprise different species, interactions and functions. We suggest that these novel systems will require significant revision of conservation and restoration norms and practices away from the traditional place-based focus on existing or historical assemblages.



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