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1 Complementary biodiversity metrics are essential to adequately

- 2 evaluate no net loss
- 3
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 STAR

21 Abstract

22 Business and finance sector actors have the potential to contribute substantially to bending 23 the curve of biodiversity loss, in the context of a global nature positive agenda. The scope of 24 application of the mitigation hierarchy – avoiding and reducing negative impacts on nature, and 25 compensating for the residual ones - is being extended, from localised impacts to potentially 26 diffuse ones at the level of corporate value chains, to achieve at least no net loss (NNL) of 27 biodiversity. This poses a need to define and quantify the equivalence of biodiversity losses and 28 gains, which may depend on the metric(s) used to measure them. Here we evaluate and compare 29 three biodiversity metrics in a global NNL context, using an optimization approach to identify 30 the minimum area to be restored in order to compensate for biodiversity losses from corporate 31 activities. The three metrics are Mean Species Abundance (MSA), the Land-cover Change 32 Impacts on Future Extinctions (LIFE) score and the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration 33 (STAR) metric. We also investigate how spatial scale constraints imposed on restoration affect 34 the achievement of NNL across metrics. We observe cases for all metrics where NNL cannot 35 be achieved within strict spatial scale constraints. We also find that NNL for one metric does 36 not guarantee NNL for the others, and that differences in the nature of the metrics (MSA, 37 compared to LIFE/STAR) influences the overall area restored to achieve NNL. The results 38 highlight how outcomes for biodiversity will be more satisfactory if using two or more 39 complementary metrics for value-chain level NNL assessments, and how avoiding and 40 minimizing losses is key, as compensation within certain spatial constraints is not always possible. 41

42 **1. Introduction**

43 In the face of the current biodiversity crisis, bending the curve of biodiversity loss is 44 increasingly urgent (IPBES, 2019). Business and finance sector actors, among others, have the 45 potential to contribute substantially to this goal (Mace et al., 2018). Target 15 of the Kunming-46 Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) specifically aims to reduce the negative and 47 increase the positive impacts of business on biodiversity and to encourage more sustainable production (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022). Stemming corporate losses of 48 49 biodiversity is linked to the concept of "no net loss" (NNL) (Robertson, 2000), frequently referred to in development projects (Maron et al., 2018). According to the mitigation hierarchy, 50 51 adverse impacts on biodiversity should first be avoided as much as possible, then minimised; restoration should then be implemented for the biodiversity that has been impacted, and 52 53 remaining residual impacts should be offset in order to achieve (at least) NNL (BBOP, 2012).

54 In practice, current offsetting – whether regulatory, required by funders or voluntary (Bull 55 and Strange, 2018) - focuses on impacts of direct operations on a defined set of priority 56 biodiversity features. Approaches to dimensioning the offsets differ, but often include both 57 overall ecosystem area and condition (Gardner et al., 2013), as well as priority features (species 58 and/or threatened/distinctive ecosystems) considering irreplaceability and vulnerability 59 (Goncalves et al., 2015). For example, the International Finance Corporation's (IFC's) Performance Standard 6 includes provisions for both natural habitats and critical habitats, *e.g.* 60 61 that include highly threatened species or constitute unique ecosystems (IFC, 2012). The 62 DEFRA Biodiversity Metric, for measuring compulsory biodiversity net gain of developments 63 in the UK, accounts for habitat area, quality, distinctiveness and its local strategic significance 64 (DEFRA, 2024). Offsets involve equivalence requirements, with limited fungibility between 65 losses and gains of different biodiversity features (Gardner et al., 2013). Measuring outcomes directly at the sites of impact instead of through indirect techniques is recommended (Gardner 66 67 et al., 2013). Dimensioning of offsets depends on the metrics used for measuring losses and gains: in an Uzbek region, offset requirements for oil and gas infrastructure varied by up to an 68 order of magnitude, and did not always lead to NNL, across a range of species- or habitat-based 69 methods used for calculating the required gain (Bull et al., 2014). Similarly, Marshall et al. 70 (2022) found different offset requirements and outcomes for simulated developments in 71 72 Australia depending on the habitat- or species-based biodiversity metric employed.

73 However, attention of business and finance is now moving beyond direct operations to the 74 value chain; reducing and compensating impacts up- and downstream, with commitments to 75 achieve NNL and even a net positive impact (NPI) at the corporate level (Rainey et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2019; zu Ermgassen et al., 2022), in the context of nature positive approaches 76 77 (Business for Nature, 2022; ICMM, 2024; Locke et al., 2021; Milner-Gulland, 2022). Here, 78 loss-gain accounting is much less clear-cut with regard to assessing both impacts and gains 79 expected from the compensation actions, as well as the equivalence of the two (Maron et al., 80 2023), since measures of biodiversity are contingent on the scale of the analysis and the metrics chosen (McGill et al., 2015). For example, evaluating the risk of vertebrate biodiversity loss 81 from soy production in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, Molotoks et al. (2023) found different 82 83 hotspots of threat dependent on the group of species selected (threatened, endemic, affiliated to 84 forest habitat, or all species). Countries identified as having higher consumption-based 85 biodiversity footprints differ when calculated with metrics of alpha or gamma diversity (Marquardt et al., 2019). Each metric of biodiversity is a proxy for one or several component(s) 86 87 of biodiversity's complexity. Corporates may choose metrics that can track prioritised 88 components of biodiversity and also support value-chain measurements, potentially across the 89 globe. Dimensioning and measuring achievement of NNL at the value-chain level implies some 90 level of aggregation of dispersed and dissimilar impacts – on different ecosystems, species, etc.

91 - into a single assessment. In many cases, incomplete knowledge of the exact location of a
92 corporate's impacts creates a further complication. The feasibility of demonstrating NNL at
93 value-chain level likely is influenced both by the choice of loss-gain metric(s) and the scale at
94 which they are aggregated and/or considered fungible. However, quantification of this influence
95 for metrics that are already being used to track biodiversity impacts in corporate contexts has
96 yet to be fully explored.

97 To address this, we examine the degree with which a restoration plan designed to achieve 98 NNL when using a given biodiversity metric also achieves NNL as measured with alternative 99 biodiversity metrics. We also examine how spatial scale constraints on restoration (related to 100 either administrative or ecological boundaries) influence the area requirements for NNL and whether it can be achieved. To do this, we develop and apply a framework to assess required 101 102 NNL actions for activities inducing biodiversity loss in different locations (e.g., for value chains) 103 in relation to the choice of the metric used to measure biodiversity losses and gains, and to the scale at which NNL is defined. For fictitious value-chain biodiversity losses we compare 104 105 restoration requirements to achieve NNL for three metrics and three geographical constraints: 106 anywhere globally (no constraint), within the countries of the losses (economically and 107 politically relevant scale), and within the ecoregions of the losses (ecologically relevant scale).

108 The metrics assessed are Mean Species Abundance (MSA), the Land-cover change Impacts 109 on Future Extinctions (LIFE) metric and the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) 110 metric. MSA is a measure of ecosystem condition, quantifying local biodiversity intactness at 111 the assemblage level (Alkemade et al., 2009), while LIFE and STAR are species-level metrics 112 of extinction risk. LIFE measures the effect of land-use change on the extinction probability of 113 species, relative to a historic baseline using a non-linear persistence score (Durán et al., 2020; 114 Eyres et al., 2024). STAR quantifies the potential contribution of habitat restoration and/or threat abatement to the reduction of species' extinction risk through a linear relationship (Mair 115 116 et al., 2021). These are three of many available biodiversity metrics, that were chosen since MSA and STAR are both cited in the TNFD's assessment approach (TNFD, 2023), as well as 117 in the GBF, as complementary indicators for goal A (MSA), and targets 4 and 15 (STAR). LIFE 118 119 scores are expected to be made publicly available and appear promising for a range of applications, in particular as the metric enables assessment of both continued corporate impacts 120 121 and gains from restoration (Eyres et al., 2024). All three are therefore candidate metrics for 122 assessing losses and gains in the context of nature-positive approaches.

123 **2.** Methods

124 2.1 <u>Overview of the approach</u>

125 We consider a number of hypothetical loss simulations, each consisting of a set of localised impacts with corresponding biodiversity loss, mimicking the multiple impacts of a value-chain 126 127 (see section 2.3 for details). Per simulation, we identify the minimum localised area to restore to achieve NNL using one of the three metrics as target. We then calculate the percentage of 128 129 NNL achieved as measured by the other metrics, for restoration over the same localised area. This computation is done under three different spatial scale constraints (global i.e. 130 131 unconstrained; country; ecoregion), defining the geographic scale at which NNL is defined, *i.e.*, 132 the scale at which losses are aggregated and where restoration can occur. We repeat the exercise 133 changing the metric used as a target in the restoration problem, leading to nine cases: three 134 target metrics combined with three spatial scale constraints. The following sections describe 135 the methodology in detail.

136 2.2 Defining equivalence of losses and gains for each metric

For each metric we define equivalence of losses and gains of biodiversity for terrestrial ecosystems. Metric data are available at a grid cell level. We consider multiple losses and gains, each occurring in distinct grid cells. Losses are assumed to arise from corporate activities leading to a total destruction of habitat and biodiversity. Gains are assumed to arise immediately and completely from habitat restoration via land-use or land cover change, restoring a set of habitats to their original state before human intervention. Details on the definitions of the metrics are provided in sections 2.2.1-2.2.3 below and in Supplementary Material 1.

144 2.2.1 Mean Species Abundance (MSA)

145 Mean Species Abundance (MSA) is an assemblage-level measure of local biodiversity 146 intactness (0-1, dimensionless) (Alkemade et al., 2009). Under the assumption that given 147 corporate activities result in a complete loss of the remaining biodiversity in grid cells i, the 148 loss of MSA can be quantified as:

$$MSA_{loss} = \sum_{i} MSA_{i} \cdot A_{i} \cdot f_{loss,i}$$
 Eq. 1

149 where MSA_{loss} is the total loss of biodiversity (>0, expressed in MSA.km²); MSA_i is the 150 biodiversity in cell *i* prior to the impact (0-1, MSA); A_i is the area of cell *i* (km^2); and $f_{loss,i}$ is 151 the fraction of cell *i* where the impact is occurring (0-1, dimensionless).

152 The global data layer available for MSA evaluates remaining biodiversity by decomposing the 153 effect of several pressures. Restoration here is assumed to only lead to gains through land-use 154 changes, since other pressures such as climate change can continue to affect biodiversity even 155 after habitat restoration. Thus, equivalence assumes that a loss and a gain can be expressed as 156 $MSA_{gain} = MSA_{loss}$, with:

$$MSA_{gain} = \sum_{j} \frac{1 - MSA_{j,LU}}{\sum_{x} (1 - MSA_{j,x})} (1 - MSA_{j}) \cdot A'_{j} \cdot f_{gain,j}$$
 Eq. 2

where MSA_{gain} is the total gain in biodiversity (>0, expressed in MSA.km²); $MSA_{j,LU}$ is the remaining biodiversity in relation to the land-use pressure in cell *j*; *x* designates all pressures affecting MSA; MSA_j is the biodiversity in cell *j* prior to the restoration (0-1, MSA); A'_j is the maximum restorable area in cell *j* (km^2); and $f_{gain,j}$ is the fraction of restorable area in cell *j* that is restored (0-1, dimensionless).

162 Losses and gains are expressed in MSA.km² to account for the area that is affected by 163 impacts/restoration actions.

164 2.2.2 Land-cover change Impacts on Future Extinctions (LIFE)

165 The Land-cover change Impacts on Future Extinctions (LIFE) metric is based on the 166 persistence score (P), which reflects the likelihood that a species will persist as a function of its 167 area of habitat (AOH) (Durán et al., 2020; Eyres et al., 2024). Thus, losses ($\Delta P < 0$) or gains 168 of persistence ($\Delta P > 0$) can be calculated based on losses or gains in AOH. Summed across all 169 species, this provides biodiversity losses, quantified using the LIFE score (Eyres et al., 2024) 170 in the following way:

$$LIFE_{loss} = \sum_{i} \sum_{s} \Delta P_{i,s} \cdot f_{loss,i} \qquad \qquad Eq. 3$$

where $LIFE_{loss}$ is the total loss (<0, dimensionless) of species persistence probability (P); $\Delta P_{i,s}$ is the marginal change in P for species s when cell *i* is completely destroyed (<0,

- 173 dimensionless), independently of all other cells; and $f_{loss,i}$ is the fraction of cell *i* where the 174 impact is occurring (0-1, dimensionless).
- Persistence is calculated as the remaining proportion of a species AOH raised to a given exponent, taken as 0.25 in the present study and in previous ones (Durán et al., 2020; Eyres et al., 2024). A discussion on the impact of choosing a different exponent is provided by Eyres et al. (2024).
- 179 Equivalence of a loss and a gain can be expressed as $LIFE_{gain} = |LIFE_{loss}|$, with:

$$LIFE_{gain} = \sum_{j} \sum_{s} \Delta P_{j,s} \cdot f_{gain,j}$$

Eq. 4

- 180 where $LIFE_{gain}$ is the total gain (dimensionless) of species persistence probability; $\Delta P_{j,s}$ is the 181 marginal change in P for species *s* when all restorable area in cell *j* is restored independently 182 of all other cells (dimensionless); and $f_{gain,j}$ is the fraction of restorable area in cell *j* that is 183 restored (0-1, dimensionless).
- 184 Note that in practice $\Delta P_{i,s}$ can be negative or positive, *i.e.*, restoration can lead to a marginal
- 185 loss or a gain of persistence, depending on the species' habitat needs. Restoration can lead to
- 186 losses in very species poor areas (e.g. deserts) where agricultural expansion has lead to increases
- 187 in biodiversity; restoring therefore leads to a loss. However, for NNL to be achieved, $\sum_j \sum_s \Delta P_{j,s}$
- 188 ensuing from restoration activities must be positive.
- 189 The calculation provided in Eq. 3 and Eq. 4 is an approximation, as the marginal persistence
- 190 changes are determined assuming that each cell is destroyed independently from others,
- whereas in our simulation more than one cell may be destroyed. The scalability of LIFE scores
- is discussed by Eyres et al. (2024), and this approximation is not expected to affect the overall
- 193 conclusions.
- 194 LIFE scores intrinsically account for area affected within ΔP .

195 2.2.3 Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR)

196 The Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) approach captures, in two distinct 197 metrics, the potential contribution of threat reduction in remaining natural habitat (STAR_T) and 198 habitat restoration (with threat abatement within the restored habitat) (STAR_R) to the reduction 199 of species extinction risk (Mair et al., 2021). Using STAR_T, a loss can be expressed as:

$$STAR_{loss} = \sum_{i} \sum_{s} \sum_{t} Q_{i,s} W_{s} C_{s,t} \cdot f_{loss,i}$$
 Eq. 5

where $STAR_{loss}$ is the total loss of dimensionless STAR_T units (>0, dimensionless) including all threats in the different cells *i* impacted; $Q_{i,s}$ is the current AOH of each species *s* within cell *i* (% of global current AOH for *s*); W_s is the IUCN Red List Category weight of species *s* (Least Concern = 0, Near threatened = 1, Vulnerable = 2, Endangered = 3, Critically Endangered = 4 (Butchart et al., 2007, 2004)); $C_{s,t}$ is the relative contribution of threat *t* to species *s* extinction risk (0-1, dimensionless); and $f_{loss,i}$ is the fraction of cell *i* where the impact is occurring (0-1, dimensionless).

Although the "full" STAR_R metric assumes abatement for all threats, here we assume, as for MSA, that restoration tackles only threats directly related to land cover, *i.e.*, that would disappear when habitat is restored. Equivalence of losses and gains can then be expressed as $STAR_{gain} = STAR_{loss}$, with:

$$STAR_{gain} = \sum_{j} \sum_{s} \sum_{t_{LU}} H_{j,s} W_s C_{s,t_{LU}} M_{j,s} \cdot f_{gain,j}$$
 Eq. 6

where $STAR_{gain}$ is the total gain of dimensionless STAR_R units (>0, dimensionless); gains occur in cells *j*; $H_{i,s}$ is the extent of restorable AOH of each species *s* within cell *j* (% of global

213 current AOH for s); W_s is the IUCN Red List Category weight of species s (Least Concern = 0,

214 Near threatened = 1, Vulnerable = 2, Endangered = 3, Critically Endangered = 4 (Butchart et

- al., 2007, 2004)); $C_{s,t_{LU}}$ is the relative contribution of threat t to species s extinction risk,
- 216 restricted to land cover related threats (0-1, dimensionless, see 2.3.2 for the threats covered);
- 217 $M_{j,s}$ is a recovery time discount based on the time elapsed since implementation of the
- restoration actions (10 years in this study, as in (Mair et al., 2021)); and $f_{gain,j}$ is the fraction

219 of restorable area in cell *j* that is restored (0-1, dimensionless).

- 220 STAR scores intrinsically account for area affected within parameters $Q_{i,s}$ and $H_{i,s}$.
- 221 2.3 <u>Simulation design and implementation</u>

222 2.3.1 Experimental design

We develop and implement a global simulation in R (v4.3.3)(R Core Team, 2024), comparing restoration area requirements to achieve NNL for hypothetical biodiversity losses, for each of three biodiversity metrics (MSA, LIFE, STAR). The experimental design is illustrated in Figure 1.



227

Figure 1. Illustration of the experimental design, to compare restoration requirements to achieve NNL across metrics, for simulated biodiversity loss from corporate activities. The simulation was implemented to run with any number of batches (X) of losses, and any number of losses (Y) within each batch. The target metric is the metric for which NNL is sought. The evaluation metrics are those with which achievement of NNL is computed.

The simulation is designed to replicate any number of corporate loss cases (hereafter referred to as batches) and any number of losses per case. One loss corresponds to the destruction of all the habitat available in a single cell *i* (*i.e.*, $f_{loss,i} = 1$), chosen at random in the terrestrial realm – as mapped by the three metrics – and without replacement, using the spatSample function from the *terra* package (v1.7-74)(Hijmans, 2024). The magnitude of each loss is calculated as described in Eq. 1 for MSA, in Eq. 3 for LIFE and in Eq. 5 for STAR. In our benchmark case, we simulate 200 batches of 10 random losses, but also perform a sensitivity analysis on both parameters, testing 200 batches of 5 or 20 losses, as well as 100 and 400 batches of 10 losses.

242 For each batch, an optimisation approach is then used to determine the minimum restorable 243 area to be restored to achieve NNL with respect to the simulated losses measured with each 244 possible target metric (step 2 in Figure 1). Per target metric, the restored area is potentially 245 spread across several cells, which are selected from a global raster of restorable areas, excluding 246 cells where a loss is simulated to occur (losses are assumed irreversible). Three geographical 247 constraints are simulated. In the unconstrained global simulation, the losses are summed to a 248 single global loss value for each batch, and optimisation is performed to determine the 249 minimum area to be restored anywhere globally. For the country and ecoregion constraints, the 250 losses of a given batch are summed per country or ecoregion, and individual optimisations 251 performed to determine, within each country or ecoregion, the required area to restore to 252 achieve NNL. Each optimisation problem is set up using the *prioritizr* package (v8.0.3)(Hanson et al., 2023) and is solved using the Gurobi solver (Gurobi Optimization, LLC, 2023) - further 253 details on parameterisation are provided in Supplementary Material 1. Each solution raster 254 255 provides the fraction that should be restored per cell to achieve (at least) NNL as measured with 256 the target metric.

257 2.3.2 Input data collection and processing

258 We obtained global raster layers of metric values required in calculations of gains and 259 losses from existing data layers. Specifically, we used the global MSA raster layer produced by Schipper et al. (2020) covering mammals, birds and terrestrial plants and aggregated over all 260 261 pressures included in the underlying GLOBIO model (climate change, land-use, roads, atmospheric nitrogen deposition, hunting), in combination with a raster of cell area produced 262 using the cellSize function in the terra package, to compute potential loss of biodiversity in 263 MSA.km² according to Eq. 1. We averaged the global raster layers produced by Schipper et al. 264 265 (2020) of MSA lost to land-use, for terrestrial plants and warm-blooded vertebrates, and combined the averaged layer with rasters of cell area and restorable proportion in each cell (see 266 267 below) to compute potential gain of biodiversity in MSA.km² according to Eq. 2. We summed across species groups the global LIFE rasters, under total destruction of existing land cover and 268 269 when restoring arable or pasture land to natural habitat, produced by Eyres et al. (2024), 270 covering mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. We used this habitat destruction map (resp. restoration map) for potential loss (resp. gain) expressed with LIFE according to Eq. 3 (resp. 271 272 Eq. 4). Finally, we used the global $STAR_T$ raster layer (all threats) and $STAR_R$ raster layer 273 restricted to land cover related threats (based on our expert opinion: threat categories 1, 2.1, 2.2, 274 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 5.3, 7.3 and 9.3 in the IUCN Threat Classification Scheme (IUCN, 2023), see Supplementary Material 1), produced by Mair et al. (2021), covering mammals, birds and 275 amphibians, for potential loss and gain values expressed with STAR as in Eq. 5 and Eq. 6. A 276 277 comparison of the scopes of the three metrics and their underlying data sources is provided in 278 Table S1 (Supplementary Material 1).

We used the raster layer representing the maximum proportion (0-1) of terrestrial areas currently used for crops or pasture that are available for restoration, from (Strassburg et al., 2020). We aligned the coordinate reference system and resolution of all other maps to those of this map of restorable area (Mollweide, 4.96×4.96 km). The cell size for the simulation is therefore 4.96×4.96 km. For construction of the map of potential gain expressed with LIFE, this harmonization requires the use of the original raster of restorable area used by Eyres et al. (2024) – please refer to the code provided for further details. The common extent between the map of restorable area and global vector layers of country and ecoregion boundaries by the World Bank (2020) and Dinerstein et al. (2017) is used to determine the final extent of all raster layers used in the simulation ($x_{min} = -17702327$, $x_{max} = 17876233$, $y_{min} = -6826244$, $y_{max} = 8750095$). The vector layers are rasterised to produce rasters containing the country/ecoregion in which each cell lies (fully or the majority of it).

In the simulation, we only consider cells that have data in all raster layers (map of restorable area, country/ecoregion per cell, metric-specific maps of potential loss and gain) – cells with *NA* values (no data) occur for example for oceans or water bodies. For each optimisation, the planning unit object contains restorable area in km² per cell. The target metric map of potential gain is used as the features object. For optimisations under country/ecoregion constraints, the maps of restorable area and potential gain expressed with the target metric are cropped to the appropriate geographical conditions using the country/ecoregion rasters before use.

298 2.3.3 Analysis of the outputs

299 The total gain from the set of restorations resulting from the optimization problem is 300 calculated as in Eq. 2, Eq. 4 and Eq. 6 with $f_{aain,i}$ provided in each solution raster. The gain is compared to the absolute value of the loss (both expressed with the evaluation metric), to 301 302 determine the percentage achievement of NNL for each possible combination of a constraint, 303 target metric and evaluation metric. In our benchmark simulation with 200 batches of 10 304 simulated losses, under the global constraint, this yields 200 data points per combination of a 305 target and evaluation metric, since the 10 losses in each batch are summed to a single overall 306 loss. Under the country and ecoregion constraints, this yields a number of data points equal to 307 the number of unique countries or ecoregions per batch – up to 2000 if all 10 losses occur in 308 unique countries or ecoregions for all 200 batches.

Data points corresponding to both a loss and gain of 0 are coerced to 100 % achievement of NNL. When none of the cells within the geographical constraint contain restorable area, the gain and area restored are coerced to 0 (and no optimisation performed). When the optimisation fails because the target (*i.e.* achievement of 100 % NNL for the target metric) cannot be met, a solution raster is manually created by designating for full restoration all cells, available for restoration, that have a potential gain through restoration greater than 0, as measured with the target metric. This leads to partial achievement of NNL for the target metric.

The total area restored is also calculated per batch for each possible geographical constraint and target metric, in the cases where NNL is consistently 100 % achieved within the batch. We choose to only represent cases with consistent 100% achievement of NNL in a batch for the target metric, to ensure comparability between batches – a smaller area restored compared to the others could otherwise be due for example to few cells being available for restoration, leading to underachievement of NNL.

322 **3. Results**

323 3.1 Percentage achievement of NNL

Our simulations reveal that achieving NNL for one metric does not guarantee this for the other two (Figure 2, Table 1). Under the global constraint, the restoration requirement to achieve NNL with MSA as the target metric leads in the majority of cases to overachievement of NNL as measured with LIFE and STAR. As the geographical constraint is increased to country then ecoregion, the overall performance for NNL gets worse (Table 1). When 329 achievement of NNL is defined with respect to either LIFE or STAR as target metrics, the 330 median percentage achievement of NNL is consistently below 100 % for the other two evaluation metrics (MSA and STAR, MSA and LIFE, respectively). Under increasing 331 332 geographical constraints, this failure to achieve NNL is slightly mitigated (Table 1), but 333 whatever the target metric for NNL, it is not consistently achieved for the other two metrics. 334 The sensitivity analysis suggests that the results are robust to changes in batch number/number 335 of losses, which affect the number of outliers but not the general shape of the box plots (Figures 336 S1, S3, S5 and S7, Supplementary Material 2).

337 We observe cases where the simulation does not achieve NNL for the target metric. The 338 corresponding data points lie at 0 %, or between 0 and 100 % achievement of NNL for identical 339 target and evaluation metric pairs (Figure 2). They reflect situations when there is no or not 340 enough restorable area or potential gain, respectively, in the geographical constraint's perimeter, 341 occurring much more frequently (8.1-10.6 % of cases) under the ecoregion - especially in 342 tundra, taiga, desert and shrubland/grassland ecoregions - than the country constraint (Table 2; 343 these countries/ecoregions are listed in Tables S2 and S3 in Supplementary Material 2). Points 344 at 0 % due to no potential gain occur only for LIFE, where the values of potential gain through 345 restoration are based on scores provided in Eyres et al. (2024), obtained using a different map 346 of restorable AOH than the one used in this study. For MSA under the country constraint, there 347 are many more data points at 0 % achievement NNL than for LIFE and STAR. These all occur 348 in Greenland, where losses for LIFE and STAR metrics are mostly measured at 0 and have thus 349 been coerced to 100 % achievement of NNL (see Methods section 2.3.3).

350	Table 1. Summary of the median	percentage achievement of NNL	per case represented in Figure 2.
220	Tuble It Summary of the meanur	per centuge denne vennent of 1 (1 (1)	per cuse representeu in rigure 21

	Geographical constraint								
	Ecoregion	Country	None	Ecoregion	Country	None	Ecoregion	Country	None
MSA Tarr	28.4	63.3	248	89.0	214	1.14E+03	100	100	100
LIFE me	1.15	0.151	6.59E-03	100	100	100	1.15	0.151	6.59E-03
STAR offic	100	100	100	0.917	0.0471	8.63E-06	0.393	5.93E-03	3.65E-04
		STAR		LIFE			MSA		
	Evaluation metric								

351



Geographical constraint

352

353 Figure 2. Percentage achievement of NNL expressed per evaluation metric, depending on the target metric 354 and geographical constraint. None: per batch, the losses were summed, and optimisation performed to determine 355 the restored area anywhere globally. Country/Ecoregion: per batch, the losses were summed within each unique 356 country/ecoregion and individual optimisations performed to determine, within each country and ecoregion, the 357 required area to restore. n = number of data points contributing to the boxplots. $n_{inf} =$ number of data points at 358 infinity (no loss as measured with the evaluation metric), represented for visualisation but not contributing to the 359 boxplots. Hollow points represent outliers (included in the box plots) and blue points represent infinite values (not 360 included in the boxplots). The box delineates the 1st and 3rd quartiles, and the median. The bottom and top whiskers 361 extend to the data point that are at most at a distance of 1.5 times the interquartile range from the bottom or top 362 hinge, respectively. Green (100 %) and red lines (0%) indicate NNL and a net loss equal to the initial loss,

363 respectively. Green, red and purple shading indicate a net gain, a net loss smaller than the initial loss, and a net loss greater than the initial loss, respectively.

365Table 2. Summary of the number of data points in Figure 2 for which there is 0 % or strictly between 0 and366100 % achievement of NNL for the target metric. n = number of data points contributing to the boxplots. n_0 ,367 $n_{partial} =$ number of data points (included in the total n) for which there was 0 % or strictly between 0 and 100 %368achievement of NNL for the target metric, respectively. In brackets: the proportion (%) of n that this represents.369For LIFE, n_0 is split between points for which the cause is no restorable area (73 points) or insufficient potential370gain (44 points).

	Geographical constraint									
	Country	Ecoregion	Country	Ecoregion	Country	Ecoregion				
п	1677	1954	1677	1954	1677	1954				
n 0	20 (1.2 %)	76 (3.9 %)	4 (0.24 %)	73 + 44 (6.0 %)	1 (0.060 %)	76 (3.9 %)				
n partial	3 (0.18 %)	100 (5.1 %)	0 (0 %)	90 (4.6 %)	2 (0.12 %)	83 (4.2 %)				
	MSA		LIFE		STAR					
	Target metric = Evaluation metric									

371

372 When the target and evaluation metric differ, we observe some data points at 0 % 373 achievement of NNL as measured with the evaluation metric (Figure 2). These occur either 374 when (a) there is no restorable area within the constraints perimeter despite a loss measured with the evaluation metric; (b) there is no gain as measured with the evaluation metric; or (c) 375 376 when there is no loss as measured with the target metric, *i.e.*, the randomly chosen cell in which 377 the loss occurs has a value of 0 for the target metric, so nothing needs to be restored, but the 378 loss is greater than 0 for the evaluation metric. When LIFE is the evaluation metric (but not for 379 MSA or STAR), restoration can occasionally lead to losses, because the restored habitat is 380 unsuitable for one or more species that have thrived in a human modified habitat. This results 381 in a percentage achievement of NNL below 0 (Figure 2), *i.e.*, a net loss of biodiversity that is 382 greater than the initial loss simulated.

383 3.2 Area restored to achieve NNL

384 Across all three geographical constraints tested, NNL is overall achieved at the batch 385 level with a smaller median area restored (in km²) when the target metric driving the restoration 386 prioritisation is LIFE or STAR, rather than MSA (Figure 3). For both the LIFE and STAR 387 metrics, adding a geographical constraint substantially increases both the median area restored 388 to achieve NNL across the entire batch of losses, and the overall spread of areas restored (Figure 389 3). Median restored area is around an order of magnitude greater for the ecoregion than the 390 country constraint. The ecoregion constraint also drastically reduces the number of batches 391 within which NNL is consistently achieved (see sample sizes in Figure 3). For MSA, the 392 geographical constraints only slightly increase the median area restored and do not seem to 393 affect the spread of areas restored across the different batches. The red dashed line in Figure 3 394 represents the maximum total area of habitat destroyed per batch (number of losses per batch 395 multiplied by cell area). The area effectively destroyed per batch is likely smaller than this 396 maximum value. Across all three constraints, the median area restored when MSA is the target 397 metric is of the same order of magnitude as the maximum possible area lost. For LIFE and 398 STAR, it is consistently smaller. As for the percentage achievement of NNL, the results appear 399 robust to changes in batch number/number of losses, with the same general trends and spreads 400 (Supplementary Material 2: Figures S2, S4, S6 and S8).



Geographical constraint

401

402 Figure 3. Total area restored per batch, target metric and geographical constraint, for 200 batches of 10 403 losses, in the cases where NNL is consistently 100 % achieved within the batch (with the relevant grouping 404 from the constraint). None: per batch, the losses were summed, and optimisation performed to determine the 405 restored area anywhere globally. Country/Ecoregion: per batch, the losses were summed within each unique 406 country/ecoregion and individual optimisations performed to determine, within each country and ecoregion, the 407 required area to restore. n = number of batches where NNL is 100 % achieved for all losses, i.e., number of data 408 points contributing to the box plot. The horizontal dashed red line indicates the maximum total area destroyed per 409 batch. The box delineates the 1st and 3rd quartiles, and the median. The bottom and top whiskers extend to the 410 data point that is at most at a distance of 1.5 times the interquartile range from the bottom or top hinge, respectively.

411 **4. Discussion**

412 4.1 <u>Result drivers</u>

When MSA is the target metric the overall performance for NNL for LIFE and STAR evaluation metrics worsens with increasing geographic constraints, but the reverse (although small) effect is observed when LIFE or STAR are the target metric. We also observed that under the global constraint, the area restored is much larger for simulations with MSA as the target metric, than those using LIFE or STAR as a target metric. These results are driven by the nature 418 of the metrics and of the optimisation, which determines the smallest possible area to restore. 419 LIFE and STAR gain values have a much larger distribution compared to MSA: the value of 420 the 95th percentile of potential gain for MSA is approximately five times greater than the median, while for LIFE and STAR it is close to 40 and 140 times the median, respectively (Figure S9, 421 422 Supplementary Material 3). This stems from the different components of nature that the metrics 423 measure. MSA is an ecosystem condition metric, looking at local ('alpha') species diversity 424 within any particular ecosystem, while LIFE and STAR are influenced by the highly skewed 425 overall geographical distributions of individual species. For MSA, cells for restoration selected 426 first (i.e., with the greatest potential gain through restoration) are those with very little 427 remaining biodiversity, where land-use has been the dominant source of biodiversity loss and 428 where most/all of the cell is restorable. For LIFE and STAR, potential gains from restoration 429 can take extreme values in cells that are within the former AOH of one or more species with a 430 very small global area of current AOH. These extreme high-value cells occur in only a few 431 places. As the scale is reduced to country and further to ecoregion, fewer very high-value cells 432 are available (Figure S10, Supplementary Material 3). It appears from the results that the cells 433 that have highest MSA potential gain globally also happen to have unusually high LIFE/STAR 434 potential gain values, while this relationship is weaker for country and ecoregion scales. When 435 the target metric is LIFE or STAR, increasing geographic constraint means that there are fewer 436 cells with high values available for restoration, so a larger overall area needs to be restored, 437 which in turn will generally increase the gains expressed in MSA.km².

438 4.2 <u>Implications for the use of complementary biodiversity metrics</u>

439 Our results highlight the challenges in choosing and applying appropriate currencies for 440 biodiversity compensation (Mayfield et al., 2022), and the importance of understanding clearly 441 what metrics actually measure and how. In the specific case of offsetting, it is unlikely that 442 MSA would be used as an assessment metric for direct-operations offsets, despite its relevance 443 for measuring ecosystem condition, as it cannot easily be measured in-field, requiring extensive 444 ecological surveys (CDC Biodiversité, 2020). STAR has been proposed (but not yet used) as 445 an offset metric (IBAT, 2021), focusing on priority features. This requires use of field-collected 446 data to calibrate estimated values and assess realized gains (Mair et al., in prep.) - the same 447 would be needed for LIFE to be used as an offset metric. For the less well-defined impacts occurring in value-chains however, it is more likely that business and finance will be looking 448 449 to metrics such as MSA, STAR and LIFE for assessing both potential losses and gains. MSA 450 and STAR are already in use for corporate impact measurement (CDC Biodiversité, 2023), and 451 recommended by the TNFD and the GBF (see section 1. Introduction).

452 From the analysis performed here, overall outcomes for biodiversity will be more satisfactory if using two or more complementary metrics - MSA and STAR and/or LIFE - for 453 454 value-chain level NNL assessments. Indeed, a single metric alone does not guarantee NNL in 455 biodiversity: loss in another dimension of biodiversity that is not measured by the single 456 indicator could still occur, or gains in one biodiversity dimension may not equate to gains in another. Comparing the Biodiversity Habitat Index (BHI) and the Red List Index (RLI) across 457 ecoregions globally, Stevenson et al. (2024) also found some disagreement between BHI and 458 459 RLI, with a number of ecoregions showing high BHI and low RLI scores, or the reverse. These 460 metrics are conceptually similar respectively to MSA, and LIFE and STAR, although their application is at large geographical scales, and BHI focuses on gamma diversity, contrary to 461 462 MSA. Our findings specifically reinforce the previously highlighted complementarity between 463 an approach based on ecosystem condition, measured for example by MSA which reports 464 changes in alpha diversity at a local scale, and one based on species extinction risk like STAR 465 or LIFE, reporting changes in gamma diversity, for assessment of corporate impact risks and opportunities (Hawkins et al., 2023). Two main approaches could be used: dimensioning
compensation to ensure NNL as measured by both (or all three) metrics, or using STAR/LIFE
as a significance weighting for MSA in calculating impacts. The former is likely to be more
demanding in terms of overall compensation requirements; the latter is more likely to focus
investment in the most important locations for biodiversity in terms of species persistence.

471 In either case, consideration should be given to the appropriate scale of fungibility for gains and losses. Global fungibility could involve compensation for potentially very different 472 473 biodiversity features than those that are impacted. Country or ecoregion-level are candidate 474 geographical units for bounding loss/gain assessments, large enough to allow some flexibility, 475 but relatively coherent in terms of socio-economic or ecological characteristics, respectively. These could also help support linkage of offsetting outcomes to jurisdictional biodiversity 476 477 targets, aligned with GBF goals (Simmonds et al., 2020). We observed that adding such spatial 478 scale constraints led to several instances where NNL could not be achieved for the chosen target 479 metric. This highlights the imperative to carefully consider locations of corporate activities; 480 NNL could be impossible to achieve depending on where losses occur. Following the mitigation 481 hierarchy at the level of value chain impacts (Maron et al., 2023) should ensure that these 482 situations are properly evaluated and any losses avoided or reduced if possible. These constraints also did not align achievement of NNL across the three metrics. Stricter equivalence 483 484 rules, for example on the ecosystem type, landscape and species lost, could also allow better 485 alignment of the outcomes. This could also avoid the risks associated with measuring NNL with 486 any of these metrics in coarse ways, such as compensating for the potential extinction of a 487 species by restoring habitat of other threatened species. While both of these outcomes are 488 comparable in a metric, there is in reality no offset for extinction. Such strict equivalence rules 489 would however be challenging to implement for real-world value chain impacts, since their exact location is likely unknown, for those occurring higher up in the chain in particular. Using 490 491 country ecoregion components (the portions of ecoregions within a particular country) as a 492 default geographical unit could be a practical approach, providing relatively high socio-493 economic and ecological coherence together with a degree of flexibility.

494 Our aim was not to comment on the relative merits of the three biodiversity metrics studied, 495 or present one as superior to the others. We highlight their main limitations in Supplementary 496 Material 3, to further discourage such interpretation of these results. By design, there are a 497 number of components of biodiversity that they do not capture; this cannot be considered as a 498 limitation of the metrics themselves. These include genetic and phylogenetic diversity, 499 functional integrity and diversity, and ecosystem services, among many (Convention on 500 Biological Diversity, 2022; Gardner et al., 2013; Richardson et al., 2023). Aiming for NNL with respect to all such components would be ideal, but generally impractical. This study 501 502 highlights the challenges of choosing which few proxy measures can feasibly be assessed and used in a simplified framework for biodiversity compensation. 503

504 4.3 <u>Outlook and future work</u>

505 While the three metrics conceptually cover biodiversity from all taxonomic groups, the 506 available data layers expressing global biodiversity state with each metric have limited coverage 507 to date. In this study, all three data layers used cover mammals and birds, with the MSA data 508 also covering terrestrial plants, LIFE amphibians and reptiles, and STAR amphibians; these 509 characteristics are susceptible to change as the data layers are updated, and could influence the 510 magnitude of gains and losses. For instance, terrestrial plant data are not yet available globally for STAR, however using the metric at the national level Mair et al. (2023) found that STAR_T 511 512 values for plants were 30 times those for vertebrates in their case study in South Africa. As 513 updated values become available for the metrics across taxa, applying the framework for each 514 species group – for LIFE and STAR, as this is not possible for MSA – could provide refinements to the results presented here. Indeed, Eyres et al. (2024) observed some regional differences in 515 516 the effect of habitat degradation and restoration for amphibians and reptiles. It should be noted 517 that the metrics differ also in their approach to land cover mapping (see Table S1, Supplementary Material 1). Former AOH for STAR and LIFE also use different timeframes, 518 519 and LIFE covers all species in the taxon groups included, while STAR covers only threatened 520 and near-threatened species. We expect that these factors influence the results much less 521 substantially than differences in overall skew of potential gain values discussed in section 4.1.

522 Assumptions were made for the simulation of the losses and restoration actions. Regarding 523 the losses, corporate activities were assumed to totally destroy the habitat at the location of 524 impact, to allow comparability across the three metrics studied. Losses could however be 525 calculated outside of this assumption: MSA_i in Eq. 1 would no longer be the biodiversity state 526 prior to habitat destruction (entirely lost), but equal to the difference between the biodiversity 527 state before and after negative impacts on biodiversity (some biodiversity could remain despite 528 corporate activities). The global data layer for MSA already includes broad levels of intensity 529 for the different pressures, allowing the measure of changes in management practices. For LIFE scores, alternative habitat destruction scenarios could be defined and computed, such as 530 531 conversion of habitats and pastures to arable land, as in (Eyres et al., 2024). Such scenarios 532 would be more challenging to compute for STAR, but could potentially be achieved through 533 only taking into account certain threats in Eq. 5. For both LIFE and STAR, another approach 534 for refinement could be to weight different habitats/land-use types by their suitability for each 535 species. This could be explored in future work. In the context of corporate impact minimisation, 536 increasing the ability of these metrics to capture nuanced changes in management practices, as 537 opposed to only the effects of drastic actions, should be a research priority.

538 Regarding restoration, it was assumed to only change land cover, as it is likely that restored 539 habitat can still undergo the effects of other pressures, such as nitrogen deposition, if it is close 540 to agricultural land for example, or climate change. We did not investigate restoration actions 541 that could reduce the impact of these pressures, which could be accounted for with MSA and 542 STAR, since the most recent global MSA values cover the impact of climate change, land-use, 543 roads, atmospheric nitrogen deposition and hunting (Schipper et al., 2020), and STAR covers 544 IUCN Red List threats (Mair et al., 2021). LIFE accounts for changes in AOH only, so this 545 could not be tested (Eyres et al., 2024). It should also be noted that LIFE and STAR account 546 for changes in AOH without considering how fragmented the total AOH may be. Since the 547 probability of impact of a given threat on biodiversity is unequally distributed globally (Harfoot 548 et al., 2021), we expect that including other threats could affect the results presented here.

549 Furthermore, our framework determines the restoration requirement by minimising the 550 overall area to restore. Realistically, the choice of restoration locations is also likely influenced 551 by economic considerations within the company of concern, since cost-effectiveness is an 552 important consideration when selecting corporate impact mitigation actions (White et al., 2023). Future work could include the use of opportunity cost data to construct the planning units, 553 554 comparing the outcomes to those based on area. As areas with lower costs of restoration are 555 likely to be the ones with lower potential gain through restoration (Strassburg et al., 2020), this 556 question raises interesting issues regarding the trade-off between restoration areas and costs.

557 Finally, the potential gain from restoration will likely materialise a long time in the future, 558 and is a maximum potentially attainable gain (or loss in some cases with LIFE scores). This 559 time lag and the uncertainty of biodiversity recovery following a release in anthropogenic 560 pressures or restoration (Jones et al., 2018; Maron et al., 2012; Quétier and Lavorel, 2011; 561 Schipper et al., 2016) should be addressed when designing offsets for given losses of

biodiversity, as stressed in Eyres et al. (2024). Regarding temporality, the gain expressed with 562 MSA and LIFE could be discounted in the same way as STAR based on a defined time-frame 563 for restoration (10 years in this study, resulting in a weighting of 0.29 for parameter $M_{i,s}$ in Eq. 564 6 (Mair et al., 2021)). This would be expected to increase the area required to achieve NNL for 565 566 both of these target metrics. Regarding the uncertainty of biodiversity recovery, Mair et al. (2021) use results presented in (Jones et al., 2018) to parameterise the temporal factor $M_{i,s}$ in 567 Eq. 6. Jones et al. (2018) also evaluate the extent of ecosystem recovery for different ecosystems 568 under various disturbance types; gains expressed in Eq. 2, Eq. 4 and Eq. 6 could be corrected 569 570 using factors derived from these results, to account for the expected incomplete ecosystem 571 recovery. Calibration of the global datasets with information from the ground will also be necessary. For LIFE and STAR, this would include an evaluation of the feasibility of species 572 recolonising restored habitat. Overall, the uncertainty of restoration outcomes further supports 573 574 the strict application of the mitigation hierarchy regarding corporate impacts, as mentioned above: minimising impacts will reduce the reliance on uncertain restoration outcomes in 575 576 corporate NNL journeys.

577 **5.** Conclusion

578 The goal of the present framework is not to inform exact restoration requirements or justify 579 the adequacy of a specific NNL policy. We discourage the use of it as such, as these 580 requirements would necessarily be inaccurate, considering the use of global datasets for the 581 three metrics, involving modelling and simplifications on the basis of assumptions presented 582 above. Field-verification would be crucial to obtain specific measurements and calculate 583 satisfactory restoration requirements if applied to real corporate losses of biodiversity. This 584 study uses restoration as an illustration of how three metrics - MSA, LIFE and STAR - compare with respect to evaluating NNL. We illustrate that achieving NNL for a single biodiversity 585 586 indicator does not guarantee NNL for indicators that address other dimensions of biodiversity. 587 Considering the wealth of biodiversity impact metrics available and the momentum around 588 concepts of NNL in the corporate sphere, our results are cause for caution in the use of these 589 metrics. Although it is unfeasible to consider a large number of different indicators, corporates 590 should carefully choose a set of metrics that represents the biodiversity components relevant to 591 their activity, and aim for NNL with respect to this selected set, as opposed to a single metric.

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603 **7. Conflict of interest**

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- curation, Writing Original Draft, Visualization, Project administration, Funding acquisition 612
- Leon Bennun: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing Review & Editing 613
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