Reading scientific papers

Learning outcome: Assess scientific papers critically (niv. 5)

Practical guidelines

Group discussions

- Come prepared to the discussion session: you've read the papers and have given it some thought
- Assistance to all group discussions is mandatory
- Each group is pre-assigned (no free choice), see list
- Groups are called by the name of the room they meet, see list
- Each group has one lecturer as coach, see list
- In all sessions, you have 45 minutes per paper
- The first session is a trial session, so no reporting is required
- Use the questions below as a guidance for your group discussions and as the basis for your report (only the second set of questions)

Individual reporting

- Each student reports on just ONE of the six papers (Clusters 1 to 6)
- Which paper you report on is pre-assigned and indicated in the list
- Your report only includes answers to the second set of questions (on the critical evaluation)
- Your report contains a maximum of 500 words
- Send your report to your supervisor indicated in the list
- Please respect the submission deadlines:

  Monday 18 September: Papers 1 and 2
  Monday 25 September: Papers 3 and 4
  Monday 2 October: Papers 5 and 6

Reading tips

- Order of reading: first the title and abstract, then look at figures, then read the entire paper
- While reading: mark the most important findings, note down any question you have, note down the doubts you have on the reasoning and logic

Questions for the discussion sessions

- Questions to help understanding the paper
  - Is this a research paper (based on new data & analysis of this), a review (that summarizes and discusses published papers) or a perspectives/opinion paper (a more free form in which personal viewpoints on authors are important)
  - What are the main conclusions or messages?
  - How did the authors reach these?

- Questions to help a critical evaluation of the paper (**your report is based on these questions**)
  - Do you think that the conclusions are justified? In other words, would you have come to the same conclusions, based on the information provided? Why (not)?
  - Do the authors take a position in a scientific or conservation debate? If so, what position and does this affect the conclusion? Why (not)?
  - Do you think the paper is clearly written? Why (not)?