

## Knowledge Synthesis Methods

### 3. Synopses and summaries<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary of method

Flexible, transparent approach to collate and summarise existing research evidence over a broad topic in a standard format. Interventions, actions, or impacts are first listed (can use a process of Solution Scanning). Review methods are flexible and pragmatic, selecting and reporting the best available search methodology, with a focus on existing systematic reviews and systematic maps where possible.

#### Key references

Detailed guidance on how to conduct this method is held by the Conservation Evidence project at the University of Cambridge ([www.conservationevidence.com](http://www.conservationevidence.com)). Sutherland *et al.* (2017) provides a summary of the method.

Sutherland *et al.* (2017) *What Works in Conservation?* OpenBook Publishers. Available from [www.conservationevidence.com](http://www.conservationevidence.com)

#### Examples of application

This approach was used by Natural England (an English government agency) to help select actions to include in Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife package of agri-environment scheme options, in the English Countryside Stewardship Scheme, introduced in 2015 (Dicks *et al.* 2015).

Dicks, L.V., Baude, M., Roberts, S.P.M., Phillips, J., Green, M., C., C. (2015). *How much flower-rich habitat is enough for wild pollinators? Answering a key policy question with incomplete knowledge.* Ecological Entomology 40 (S1), 22-35.

#### Synopses and summaries

Cost	Staff (12-120 months FTE), subscriptions (article access), expertise (web platform manager), web design
Time required	12-120 months

<sup>1</sup> A guidance note from Dicks LV, Haddaway N, Hernández-Morcillo M, Mattsson B, Randall N, Failler P, Ferretti J, Livoreil B, Saarikoski H, Santamaria L, Rodela R, Velizarova E, and Wittmer H. (2017). *Knowledge synthesis for environmental decisions: an evaluation of existing methods, and guidance for their selection, use and development – a report from the EKLIPSE project.*

Repeatability	High (if conducted, recorded and archived properly)
Transparency	High (if conducted well, i.e. endorsing organisations)
Risk of bias	Moderate-low (due to the methodology, which may not be comprehensive)
Scale (or level of detail)	Independent of scale (any)
Capacity for participation	Potential consultation throughout (using an expert advisory board, not public consultation)
Data demand	High (no reanalysis of existing data)
Types of knowledge	Scientific/technical; explicit
Types of output	Interactive website of narrative evidence, user-friendly written report plus other communication materials (e.g. policy brief), identification of knowledge gap/knowledge cluster
Specific expertise required	Training, good writing skills, topic expert, web management specialist

### Strengths

Easy to read/user-friendly  
 Updatable  
 Includes expert engagement  
 Open access  
 Appropriate for very broad topic areas

### Weaknesses

Report typically written only in English  
 High time/resource (staff and expertise/training/access to research papers) requirement  
 May facilitate vote-counting by end users