

IUCN Red List

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The **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species** (also known as the **IUCN Red List** or **Red Data List**), founded in 1964, is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world's main authority on the conservation status of species. A series of Regional Red Lists are produced by countries or organizations, which assess the risk of extinction to species within a political management unit.

The IUCN Red List is set upon precise criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies. These criteria are relevant to all species and all regions of the world. The aim is to convey the urgency of conservation issues to the public and policy makers, as well as help the international community to try to reduce species extinction. According to IUCN (1996), the formally stated goals of the Red List are (1) to provide scientifically based information on the status of species and subspecies at a global level, (2) to draw attention to the magnitude and importance of threatened biodiversity, (3) to influence national and international policy and decision-making, and (4) to provide information to guide actions to conserve biological diversity.^[1]

Major species assessors include BirdLife International, the Institute of Zoology (the research division of the Zoological Society of London), the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and many Specialist Groups within the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). Collectively, assessments by these organizations and groups account for nearly half the species on the Red List.

The IUCN aims to have the category of every species re-evaluated every five years if possible, or at least every ten years. This is done in a peer reviewed manner through IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Specialist Groups, which are Red List Authorities responsible for a species, group of species or specific geographic area, or in the case of BirdLife International, an entire class (Aves).^[2]

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The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species



Headquarters	United Kingdom
Region served	International
Official language	English
Parent organization	International Union for Conservation of Nature
Affiliations	Species Survival Commission, Birdlife International, Conservation International, NatureServe, Botanic Gardens Conservation International, Royal Botanic Gardens, Texas A&M University, Sapienza University of Rome, Zoological Society of London, Wildscreen
Website	www.iucnredlist.org

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History

1964 Red List of Threatened Plants

The 1964 IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants used the older pre-criteria Red List assessment system. Plants listed may not, therefore, appear in the current Red List. IUCN advise that it is best to check both the online Red List and the 1997 plants Red List publication.^[3]

2006 release

The 2006 Red List, released on 4 May 2006 evaluated 40,168 species as a whole, plus an additional 2,160 subspecies, varieties, aquatic stocks, and subpopulations.

2007 release

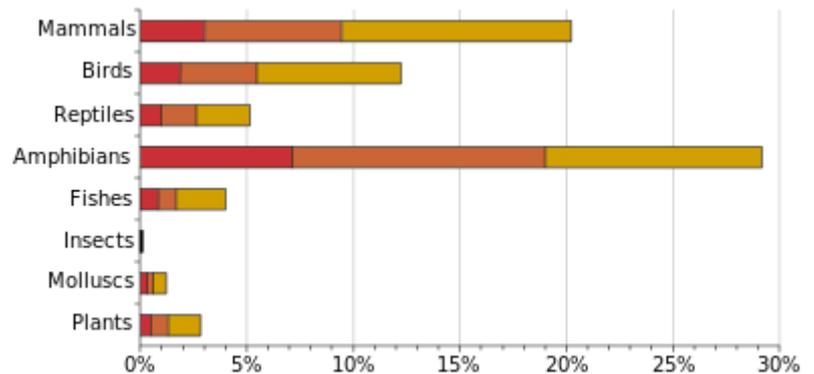
On 12 September 2007, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) released the **2007 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**. In this release, they have raised their classification of both the western lowland gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) and the Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) from endangered to critically endangered, which is the last category before extinct in the wild, due to Ebola virus and poaching, along with other factors. Russ Mittermeier, chief of Swiss-based IUCN's Primate Specialist Group, stated that 16,306 species are endangered with extinction, 188 more than in 2006 (total of 41,415 species on the Red List). The Red List includes the Sumatran orangutan (*Pongo abelii*) in the Critically Endangered category and the Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) in the Endangered category.^[4]

2008 release

The 2008 Red List was released on 6 October 2008, at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, and "has confirmed an extinction crisis, with almost one in four [mammals] at risk of disappearing forever". The study shows at least 1,141 of the 5,487 mammals on Earth are known to be threatened with extinction, and 836 are listed as Data Deficient.^[5]

2012 release

The Red List of 2012 was released 19 July 2012 at Rio+20 Earth Summit; nearly 2,000 species were added, with 4 species to the extinct list, 2 to the rediscovered list. The IUCN assessed a total of 63,837 species which revealed 19,817 are threatened with extinction. With 3,947 described as "critically endangered" and 5,766 as "endangered", while more than 10,000 species are listed as "vulnerable". At threat are 41% of amphibian species, 33% of reef-building corals, 30% of conifers, 25% of mammals, and 13% of birds. The IUCN Red List has listed 132 species of plants and animals from India as "Critically Endangered".^{[6][7][8][9][10][11][12][13][14]}



The percentage of species in several groups which are listed as critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable on the 2007 IUCN Red List.

IUCN Red List Categories

Species are classified by the IUCN Red List into nine groups,^[15] set through criteria such as rate of decline, population size, area of geographic distribution, and degree of population and distribution fragmentation.

- Extinct (EX) – No known individuals remaining.
- Extinct in the wild (EW) – Known only to survive in captivity, or as a naturalized population outside its historic range.
- Critically endangered (CR) – Extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
- Endangered (EN) – High risk of extinction in the wild.
- Vulnerable (VU) – High risk of endangerment in the wild.
- Near threatened (NT) – Likely to become endangered in the near future.
- Least concern (LC) – Lowest risk. Does not qualify for a more at-risk category. Widespread and abundant taxa are included in this category.
- Data deficient (DD) – Not enough data to make an assessment of its risk of extinction.
- Not evaluated (NE) – Has not yet been evaluated against the criteria.

When discussing the IUCN Red List, the official term "threatened" is a grouping of three categories: Critically Endangered, Endangered, and Vulnerable.

1994 categories and criteria

The older 1994 has only a single "Lower Risk" category which contained three subcategories:

- Conservation Dependent (LR/cd)
- Near Threatened (LR/nt)
- Least Concern (LR/lc)

In the 2001 system Near Threatened and Least Concern have now become their own categories, while Conservation Dependent is no longer used and has been merged into Near Threatened.

Possibly extinct

The tag of "possibly extinct" (PE)^[16] is used by Birdlife International, the Red List Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List.^[17] BirdLife International has recommended PE become an official tag for Critically Endangered species, and this has now been adopted, along with a "Possibly Extinct in the Wild" tag for species with populations surviving in captivity but likely to be extinct in the wild (e.g. Spix's macaw).

Versions

There have been a number of versions, dating from 1991, including:^{[18][19]}

- Version 1.0 (1991)
- Version 2.0 (1992)

Conservation status by IUCN Red List category	
	
Extinct	
Extinct (EX)	(list)
Extinct in the Wild (EW)	(list)
Threatened	
Critically Endangered (CR)	(list)
Endangered (EN)	(list)
Vulnerable (VU)	(list)
Lower Risk	
Near Threatened (NT)	(list)
Conservation Dependent (CD)	(list)
Least Concern (LC)	
Other categories	
Data Deficient (DD)	(list)
Not Evaluated (NE)	
Related topics	
International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	
IUCN Red List	
Lists of organisms by population	
	



Comparing the number of species in each category of IUCN Red List.

- Version 2.1 (1993)
- Version 2.2 (1994)
- Version 2.3 (1994)
- Version 3.0 (1999)
- Version 3.1 (2001)
- Version 4 (2015)

For plants, the 1997 Red List is the most important source.^[20]

Criticism

In 1997, the IUCN Red List came under criticism on the grounds of secrecy (or at least poor documentation) surrounding the sources of its data.^[21]

These allegations have led to efforts by the IUCN to improve its documentation and data quality, and to include peer reviews of taxa on the Red List. The list is also open to petitions against its classifications, on the basis of documentation or criteria.^[22] A *Nature* editorial defended the Red List's relevance in October 2008.^[23]

It has been suggested that the IUCN Red List and similar works are prone to misuse by governments and other groups that draw possibly inappropriate conclusions on the state of the environment or to effect exploitation of natural resources.^[24]



1994 IUCN Red List categories (version 2.3), used for species which have not been reassessed since 2001.

The Red List and Wikipedia

Wikipedia itself can provide a useful tool for identifying threatened species in certain countries; country initiatives and lists include:

- Russian Federation
- Việt Nam

See also

- CITES
- Conservation status
- EDGE of Existence Programme
- EDGE Species
- Lists of organisms by population
- Red List Index
- Regional Red List
- Species by IUCN Red List category
- The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History (nonfiction book)
- Wildlife conservation

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External links

- **IUCN Red List** website

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