



THE IUCN RED LIST OF THREATENED SPECIES™

A key conservation tool



What is The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species?

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ (or The IUCN Red List) has a long established history as the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plant and animal species. It is based on an objective system of assessing the risk of extinction for a species. Species listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable are collectively described as 'threatened'.

What information is included for each species?

The IUCN Red List is not just a register of names and associated threat categories. It is a rich compendium of information on the threats to the species, their ecological requirements, where they live, and information on conservation actions that can be used to reduce or prevent extinctions.

How is The IUCN Red List compiled?

Species assessments on The IUCN Red List are generated through the knowledge of thousands of the world's leading species scientists through a peer review process. Contributions are made by members of IUCN's Species Survival Commission, the IUCN Red List Partnership and other experts. Information management tools, collectively referred to as the Species Information Service (SIS), have been developed to collect, manage, process, and publish data on The IUCN Red List.

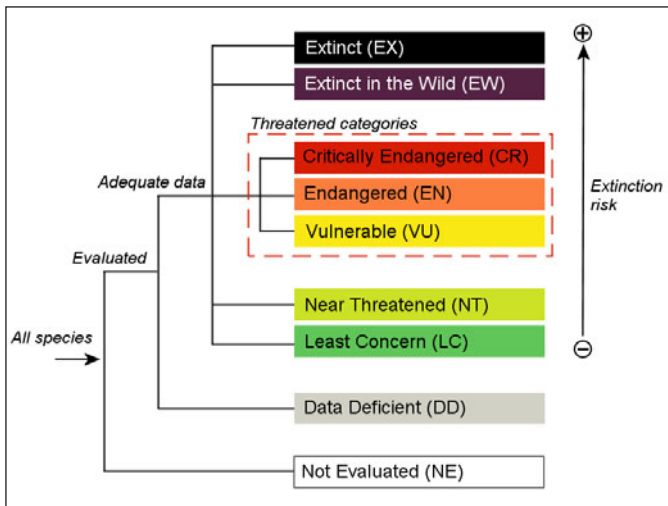
What species are included in The IUCN Red List?

By 2008, 44,837 species have been assessed and 38% have been classified as threatened. Comprehensive assessments of every known species of mammal, bird, amphibian, shark, reef-building coral, cycad and conifer have been conducted. There are ongoing efforts to complete the assessment of all reptiles, all fishes, and selected groups of plants and invertebrates. Although, only a small proportion of the world's species has so far been assessed, this sample indicates how life on earth is

The Iberian Lynx Lynx pardinus - Critically Endangered. © Joe Zammit-Lucia

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Structure of the Red List Categories.

faring, how little is known, and how urgent the need is to assess more species.

National and regional Red Lists

IUCN has developed guidelines for assessing the status of species at sub-global levels to enable the production of national and regional Red Lists. IUCN is increasingly undertaking national and regional Red List assessments and is collaborating on national Red List projects to incorporate their data into the global IUCN Red List.

How is the information in The IUCN Red List used?

The IUCN Red List has a wide range of users including conservationists, policy makers, and businesses. Below are some examples of different uses:

Indicator of Biodiversity Trends: Governments have agreed various targets to reduce biodiversity loss and indicators are vital in tracking progress in achieving these. The IUCN Red List Index (RLI) provides such an indicator and reveals trends in the overall extinction risk of sets of species.

Policymaking: The IUCN Red List informs national legislation and multi-lateral environmental agreements. It is also used to prioritize financial allocation (e.g. by the Global Environment Facility).

Conservation Planning: Several conservation planning tools rely on The IUCN Red List, including Important Bird Areas, Important Plant Areas, Key Biodiversity Areas, Alliance for Zero Extinction sites, and systematic conservation planning.

Public and Private Site Management: The IUCN Red List is a screening tool for land development and can guide environmental impact assessments. The wealth of information on habitats and threats to species are used in biodiversity management plans and site rehabilitation plans.

Red for Danger... Red as a 'Wake up Call?' Biodiversity loss is one of the world's most pressing crises with many species declining to critical levels. At the same time there is growing awareness of how biodiversity underpins human livelihoods.



Species are the building blocks of biodiversity and provide us with essential services.
© Jean-Christophe Vié

The IUCN Red List is a clarion call for the drive to tackle the extinction crisis. Many key conservation organizations and information websites rely on The IUCN Red List to help spread their message and educate the world about conservation issues.

The IUCN Red List Website

The IUCN Red List is too large to publish as a book. However, it can be viewed in its entirety on www.iucnredlist.org, a website managed and maintained by the IUCN Species Programme. It is updated once a year and information is made freely available to all users.

Red List data allows detailed analysis of biodiversity at various scales across the globe.

